

THE LION'S TALE OF THE HUNT: ONYAMESOM

By

DANIEL NYANTE

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ABSTRACT

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DANIEL NYANTE

Orality alone cannot disqualify a religious system from qualitative greatness because Judaism, Christianity and Islam were all orally-based for long periods of time before their teachings were codified in writing.¹

Onyamesom is the heritage into which the traditionalists were born. It is maintained by Onyame and influenced by the ancestors. It emerged from the sustaining faith held by the forebears of the present generation and is being practiced today in various forms and intensities in African homelands and settlements.²

God at the beginning gave the Bible to one group, the Qu'ran to another, and Amanmere to us. Our Amanmere is Onyame's laws to us and Onyame tell us too where the gold is with which we trade. We know Onyame already ourselves....As to the commandments of Onyame, we know that we keep them all.³

The bearers of the new spirituality spoke with the authority of God and their interpretation of the Bible was used as proof of the veracity of their utterances.

Traditional spirituality had to give way to new forms of religion and knowledge of self

¹ Prince Conteh, "Can the African Christian Problem Ever be solved?" World Council of Churches, Inter-religious Dialogue & Cooperation 49 (July, 2007): *Current Dialogue, Magazine*, EBSCOhost (accessed November 24, 2009).

² Ibid.

³ Kofi Asare Opoku, "Cooking on the two legs of the Hearth: African Spirituality and the Socio-Cultural Transformation of Africa," Asante-Opoku-Reindorf Memorial Lectures, Kwame Bediako Lecture Series, Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Mission, Theology and Culture, Akropong-Akuapem, Ghana, November 4, 2009.

began to dwindle, for the old identities has little or no place in the new dispensation.⁴

This led to the emergence of a new and shallow identity imposed from outside; and the result has been the entrenchment of a negative attitude of Africans towards their own spiritual and cultural heritage, a mortifying imitation and a lamentable lack of originality and reliance on borrowings, and ignoring the ancestral wisdom which warns that:

“Begged water does not quench thirst”⁵ This is the tale of the hunting told from the lions’ point of view; this is Onyamesom.

⁴ Joseph Lule, *The Hidden Wisdom of the Baganda* (Arlington, Va: Humbolt and Hartmann, 2006), 162.

⁵ Kofi Asare Opoku, “Cooking on the two legs.”

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this project first to my parents, my family especially my son, Kofi. To those who had faith, trusted in me, inspired me and pushed me even beyond my limits to complete this.....this is to you!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

During my search to select a topic for my research project, I met many African theologians and historians and I marvel at the wealth and depth of knowledge that I did not know existed. Professor Kofi Asare Opoku, Catechist Abboah Offei, Rev. George O. Kwapong, Rev. Dr. Kwame Bediako (who passed away recently) Professor Dr. Mercy Oduyoye and Professor Addo-Fening are a few of the scholars I discovered during my search for knowledge. To the custodians of the tradition, Krontihene of Akuapem, Nana Offei Agyeman, Mamfehene Osahene Nana Ansah Sasraku III, I say a big Thank you. With these scholars I feel like I am truly at the beginning of my journey and it is quite empowering. I am honored to be working on something so dear to my heart.

I couldn't have done this work if it wasn't for those who were more than my teachers; those who insisted that I do my work and do it well even when I had no wish to do it. But with the promptings of the heart, I just gathered courage to continue even when I thought I could no longer go on. With their patience, their humility and their expressive desire of what they thought was necessary because of what they had heard me talk about even though I was not really sure of where I was going, they pushed me. They made me see that their experience and advice energized me and made me realize that at this time of need; that it can be accomplished so we all have to come together in fulfillment of the dreams of TIDAC which is something so dear to us as a group.

You know who you are, this is the beginning of the actual work, so be alert and let's get it on.....

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Bre dodow a gyata benya nea ode can abakɔ sem, a hayɔ mu nsem nyinaa be yie ɔbomofa
aye

Until the lions have their own historians, tales of hunting will always glorify the hunter –
Ghanaian proverb:

As children, our responsibilities were our own. If we chose to play after school rather than do our house chores, no one would stop us, but it meant that it would probably take us till midnight to complete the work. No one would be allowed to do chores for us. My father taught me to be honest and not to dwell too much on my ailments. I remember an incident one day when I told him that I was not feeling well and did not want to go to school; he said I could stay at home, and I did. It so happened that there was a movie being shown later that day at the public square that I wanted to see⁶.

By noon, I started saying that I felt much better, hoping to convince him that I had recovered. When everyone was ready to go, he announced to all that I couldn't go to the movie because I was not feeling well. That taught me a lesson. From that point on, even when I was not feeling up to it, I did not let a headache stop me from going to school. He would also check on my progress in school. Right in front of the whole class, he would ask the teacher questions that embarrassed me, to the point that I was always on my best behavior in school after that.

⁶ Movies came to the public square of the town once in a while, it was a great occasion for the whole town which was a big social gathering and if one missed it, you had missed a big event which no one wanted to miss.

Where did my father and the other elders⁷ in my community get their wisdom? As a child, I saw my mother go to church every Sunday, but I do not remember my father going to church. The other elders were not readers of the Bible, neither did they go to church, but they had a strong belief system. I am not sure where they got it from, other than from their community; this wisdom known as *Onyamesom*⁸, and its values were firmly transmitted by the elders within the community. Our fathers and their fathers before them believed in a Supreme Being, who was shown reverence by the way they referred to this Supreme Being. *Onyamesom* is a form of worship, which our great ancestors relied upon to show their reverence to God. This way of life is not restrictive; you can worship in your kitchen, market, or farm.

In Ghana, when you meet someone and exchange greetings with them, you ask how they are doing; their automatic answer is *Onyame adom*, meaning “By the Grace of God.” You may hear this everywhere; at the riverside, by the graveyard, when burying the dead, at social gatherings; anywhere and everywhere, since *Onyamesom* permeates every aspect of African culture. “A close observation of Africa and its societies will reveal that religion is at the root of African culture and is the determining principle of African Life. It is no exaggeration, therefore, to say that in traditional Africa, religion is life and life, religion.”⁹

⁷ An elder is someone who is given a high status in society because they are a living model for the other groups in the society to emulate. In every clan, elders become the ruling class, in charge of leadership.

⁸ *Onyamesom* was the way of life passed on from the ancestors; from generation to generation. It is the African culture which is a religious culture and whatever one is engaged in, one is fully involved in a religious experience.

⁹ Opoku Kofi Asare, *West African Traditional Religion* (Accra, London: FEP International Private Ltd., 1978), 54.

Our home was the seat of our Clan-the Asona¹⁰ in the community, and during the Festival of Odwira¹¹, the elders and every member of the clan would travel back home from wherever they were, to the clan seat for the celebrations and weeklong festivities. All the elders would bring drinks¹² for everyone to partake, and all these drinks would be kept by my father, as the head Abusuapayin. He would keep the drinks in his room.

I remember a particular incident which taught me the merits of honesty, patience and the rule of law. A group of the clan elders came to our house. My father was in his room, and we all assumed that he was sleeping. When we informed the elders, they did not take very kindly to this, and they insisted that I (being the youngest boy at that time) go into my father's room and get some drinks to start the day's celebration. Even though I was hesitant, I could not refuse to do what an elder had asked me to do.

Fortunately for me, my father was awake when I went into his room. He did not appear to be sleeping, but rather meditating and practicing solitude and silence. He asked me why I had come, and I explained it to him. He instructed me to get the drinks and take them to the elders who had asked for them, which I did. When my father came out from his rest, he called a meeting of the elders, and I was asked to point out the one who had insisted on me going into the room, disturbing my father, to get drinks. I pointed the

¹⁰ The Clan is a social group with a common ancestry. The Asona is a clan in the Akan society, whose totem is the crow, symbolizing humility and peace.

¹¹ The Odwira Festival is celebrated by all Akans to honor their dead kings and ancestors, and to cleanse the nation from all past evils. It also marks the beginning of a New Year in African Tradition in specific areas.

¹² It is customary for drinks to be presented to the head of the clan, and libation to be poured before any of the elders may partake of the drinks. The rest is kept by the head of the family, and used to serve house guests.

elder out; he was found guilty and asked to pay his fine in drinks. This punishment was meted out immediately, and he was warned never to do that again.¹³

When there were important community issues to be discussed, the Paramount Chief would call his cabinet, which was made up of all divisional chiefs. The divisional chiefs would congregate at the palace with their Okyeames and their elders. Our house in Akropong was located within the palace square, where the Paramount Chief resided. This square, being the citadel of our tradition, saw much activity and the myriad customary rituals, some of which were performed within sight of our home. This was because my father was one of the elders of the town.

In our tradition, a calendar year is divided into 40 day cycles. When it falls on a Sunday it is called Akwasidae¹⁴ and on Wednesday it is Awukudae¹⁵. The ninth Awukudae ushers in the Odwira festival, which is celebrated by all townships under the Paramountcy.¹⁶

I remember one festival day in particular. The talking drums had started beating as usual, but this time the rhythm was palpable, the resonance intense. I felt that I had now come of age, because I instinctively knew that soon, all the divisional chiefs notably, the Krontihene (Chief of Akropong), Okoman, Adum, Asona, Aboasa, Santewase, Banmu and Twafo (forming the cabinet - Enstoolment is by descent and the exercise of authority is validated by traditional religious beliefs) would congregate at the palace with

¹³ In the society, the elders are supposed to exhibit exemplary qualities for others to emulate, so it was unforgivable whenever an elder stepped out of line.

¹⁴ This is a festival day that is celebrated on a Sunday.

¹⁵ This is a festival day that is celebrated on a Wednesday.

¹⁶ The Akuapem district comprises of 17 towns which form the Paramountcy; with one head as the Paramount chief.

their own linguists, and inner circle of Elders. At a certain point, the *Okyeame* (linguist to the paramount Chief) would arrive at our house, carrying his staff of command to summon my father and other elders of the town, to the palace. It was not uncommon for young boys to accompany their fathers on occasions like this, and I often did.

On this occasion, the event was the celebration of Adae festival¹⁷ Preparations for the celebration would begin the day before. Food is cooked for all those attending, but most importantly, it is cooked for the sacred room. There, the King and Elders would visit *Nkonnwafie*, which is the sacred resting place where the spirits of departed chiefs are housed, and symbolically offer food and thanks to the spirits of departed kings, asking for their patronage and protection.

Everyone stood up as the drumming and horn blowing intensified, announcing the imminent arrival of the King (Paramount Chief). The beginning of the ‘state’ gathering started with the *Nsaguo*, or pouring of the libation. (This gives an intriguing insight into custom, tradition and religious belief.) The *Nsaguo* was performed as follows:

The *Nsaguo*:

With sandals removed, both hands holding a bottle of schnapps, and looking up to the heavens in full vision of the audience, the chief *Okyeame* surrounded by his team began his prayers or supplication for the entire gathering, starting with:

“*Ooh! Onyankopong, Tweduapon, Osorosorohene.* (Almighty God, God of the Heavens), we show you drink, we do not offer you drink, listen to our prayer.” The Chief poured a bit of the schnapps (drink) on the ground and continued: ‘We thank you for your kindness and bountiful blessings on our kingdom; AsaaseYaa (Mother Earth), accept our drinks,

¹⁷ The Akans calculate a month as forty or forty-two days and a traditional year as nine traditional months. At the end of every fortieth day, a festival known as the Adae festival is celebrated.

thanks for your sustenance and for this year's bumper harvest. Ancestors of the Agona and Asona Clans," he poured a drop of the drink and said "have a drink from your children." He then recited words of praise to the ancestral spirits of the various chiefs currently occupying Stools in the sacred room, and offered them a drink.

He continued with past heroes in hierarchical order, alluding to their divine or magical exploits, their bravery, valor and achievements and asking for intercessory blessings on the community. It was believed that because ancestral spirits lived underground, the Earth was a point of intimate contact between the living and their ancestors.¹⁸ At each pouring of the drink to the ground, the team would murmur approval such as: 'well said', 'truthful', 'this is blessing', 'hit the point', 'say it all', 'let them hear it', etc.

Having called on the ancestors who are stakeholders in the welfare and development of the 'state', *Okyeame* then stated the purpose of the gathering, touching on all salient points and asking the ancestors to intercede on the State's behalf. He may have given a progress account of the previous gatherings, offering thanks and asking for guidance in future deliberations. Finally, to end his prayers, he would call on 'divine executioners' to deal severely and without mercy, with the agents of *Obonsam* (Satan) and/or anyone who does not want to see the progress, prosperity and long life of the community and the 'state'.

Regarding these people, he would add, send them to the cemetery where they belong. After the chief *Okyeame* had taken a sip, the rest of the schnapps would be passed to the King for drinking and then likewise to all sub chiefs. By this gesture they

¹⁸ Institute for Diasporan & African Culture, Winterim lecture series at Akropong Akuapem, December, 2008 - January 2009 winter seminar.

symbolically shared a drink with their ancestors, after the ancestors had drunk first. The *Omanhene* would donate a spotless goat, usually colored white, to be slaughtered in gratitude for the patronage, protection and guidance of the ancestral spirits, or as appeasement for the transgressions of the individual or community. A well-inspired prayer receives congratulatory messages and statehood pride.

Aspects of the ritual described above permeate nearly all facets of traditional life and worship. It pervades throughout daily, weekly or monthly activities, and is performed to acknowledge the presence of God, the divine and ancestral spirits, and also to communicate with them, linking the spiritual world to the world of the living. The above notwithstanding, the underlying systemic beliefs in terms of ‘*Onyamesom*’ will be explored in later chapters.

When I was informed about the Asafosa Peace Ritual, I decided to explore the parallels between that peace ritual and Holy Communion. I found that several African traditional rituals have parallels in the Bible. These rituals -- and festivals – date back to the time before the missionaries arrived on the Gold Coast. Two of these rituals/festivals are:

1) The Odwira Festival

2) The Asafosa Peace Ritual which is similar to the Last Supper and celebrated as the ritual for peace.

My understanding of Christianity

As a child, Christianity was a foreign concept to me. In middle school, we learned about the “imposed” European culture in history class. The question that kept gnawing at me was: If the Europeans had not come to Africa, what would we Ghanaians/Africans have done? Again at Seminary, this question gnawed at me. I finally decided to pursue

research into what belief systems our ancestors had before the Europeans arrived to disrupt our community belief systems.

Church was acceptable, due to the benefits that the missionaries tagged on as incentives. In primary school, we were taught to recite passages like Psalm 23 and other Bible verses without fully understanding their true meaning. There is a proverb in Akan which goes: *Obi nkyere akwadaa Nyame*. “No one teaches a child who God is.” I knew that God existed; I was not sure that Christ existed. The connection between God and Christ was unclear. To me, God and Christ were the same. The real relationship between God and Christ only became apparent when I came to the United States. That was also when I learned the difference between the Old and the New Testaments.

The Europeans built a lot of schools in an effort to spread Christianity. It was repeatedly drilled into us that on becoming Christians (everyone was assumed to be, or desired to be, a Christian upon enrolling in the school) we should abstain from worldly activities – meaning the cultural, social and spiritual customs of our people. The teachers seemed to have ears everywhere, and were always ready to correct infraction of these rules by using corporal punishment. The easiest way to conform to these rigid requirements was to play only with fellow pupils, and to cut one's self away from anyone who did not share the Christian custom and mission of our school.

Our teachers even discouraged contact with children who attended other schools not belonging to the same Missionary organisation. By extension, this also meant that joining in any activities not organized by the school or churches were strictly forbidden. Any infraction was severely punished, if discovered by school or church authorities. This

process of condemning anything ‘native’ created an inferiority complex in the colonized peoples who attended western schools.

Having been born and raised in Akropong, Ghana, and as an immigrant in America, I often reflect on my childhood, where the impact of my culture was strong. The basic values received from my parents, and in school have brought me to where I am today. I used to grumble about all the chores I had to do, but looking back, I realize that it was due to God’s love for me that I was able to have those experiences. It enabled me to understand that God had a reason for my being. Doing chores as a child taught me to share, and to be thoughtful toward others.

In summary, the experiences I encountered while growing up taught me compassion, allowing me to love my neighbor as myself. So, do I recoil when the problems of this world create injustices that affect me and my neighbors? The struggles that I encounter make me seek justice, and that prompts me to try to make my neighbor’s life more worthwhile. Knowing where I came from, I believe, I have acquired some knowledge and wisdom that can be of help to my brothers, sisters and neighbors. If these qualities that I have acquired cannot be used to help my community, then it is of no use to me. Though I always try to help, it plagues me when it seems that my efforts are not enough.

The problems in our communities are so overwhelming that considerable effort needs to be made to create a better life for our people. While growing up, I had exposure to the lifestyles of the European immigrants who had settled in my town. It was considered a “privilege” by my schoolmates and others in the town to be the playmate of the European children of the Principal of the First Training College in Ghana. I thought I

was lucky, because since my cousin was the cook for that family, I had access to their European children. That made me start dreaming of going to the West one day. Not surprisingly, I was not alone in my dream of going to the West. Most of my classmates wanted to travel to the west, so it is not strange that most of us ended up in Europe or America.

Over the years, I have realized the value of my own culture. I see how Almighty God has been with me all these years, helping, shaping, molding, and teaching me humility, because these have been my guiding principles during my stay overseas. However, I am plagued by the recollections of my childhood years, and at times; I wonder how I ended up in America. I guess the search for the emancipation and the true meaning of life was the motivating reason.

Coming to America

I find the biblical stories of Genesis and Exodus powerful, because they resemble my own story. In every society, each generation's testimony of their trials and tribulations becomes stories that help the generations pull together. These trials and tribulations are not to punish, but to bring us closer to God the creator. God initiates these trials to strengthen society/communities, and because He knows society/community can bear with these trials and tribulations. Isaiah 41:10 states that:

Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, and surely I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Paul in his letter to the Romans (5:3) states it even more clearly:

And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance.

We have our own stories from our ancestors, which up until a few years ago, were orally handed down to us. We need to write these stories down now, as testimony for the generations that will come after us. To me the biblical, stories in Genesis and Exodus are similar to our stories as immigrants. Our offspring should know about our struggles, so they can pass it down to the future as the history of their ancestors. These stories will help our society to understand whether God has been in our lives or not. This will help our people to understand how God created us to be, and that whatever we accomplish; we do that to glorify the purposes of God in our life. Until we do that, we cannot find rest, because the main reason for our being has not been defined to show our true self. We are the only ones that can define our true self. This is an inner prompting, given to us from God our maker: I am here for a purpose, and I have to find that purpose and pursue it to the maximum in order to experience fulfillment.

A lack of economic opportunities was one of the reasons why Abraham left his home, and went to look for a better place with economic advantages. When an immigrant has amassed wealth, one would hope that this individual would go back to his home community, and help the people there, especially in the case of someone who has been educated through a free university education and scholarships.

I feel that it was God's plan that we end up in America to acquire knowledge and wisdom, so that we can go back home and rebuild the land that God originally gave us. I relate our story to that of the Israelites in Genesis and Exodus in the Bible; it is time for us to go back home, to help build the area's macro-economic infrastructures. The missionaries changed the course of our existence, and our society has become dependent

on Western and European forms of identity, while remaining mired in the developmental agenda.

Macro-economic achievements of the last decade do not translate into economic well-being for many Ghanaians, and this has given rise to widespread corruption in public institutions, with its attendant bribery to secure undeserved favors. Jobs are necessary for these new forms of civilization. The ever-growing population has not kept pace with industrial development. As long as jobs are lacking, poverty will increase, because farming and agriculture have been displaced as sources of income. Our mode of housing and other cultural forms have all changed to incorporate western lifestyles. We have become dependent on western values for our survival.

For the past 30 years, there has not been any significant increase in housing development in certain areas, though the population has increased threefold. While jobs have been created commensurate with industrial and economic activities, these are mainly in the cities. Realistic development is needed in order to benefit whole communities. In the United States, entire groups of African immigrants from various communities seem to be trapped by American culture. Being brought up in a communal society, they find it difficult to adapt to western individualism.

African communalism and Western individualism each have advantages and disadvantages; one has to look at both systems in order to help the poor and disenfranchised in our home communities. When people of African descent express their deep frustration, I empathize with them. Being immigrants, most of us have two homes now. We tend to believe that the communities we left behind no longer welcome us,

since we have become westernized. We are not ready to go back home, and yet we realize that we are moving away from the values we hold dear from childhood.

We prize the feeling of “being civilized” and fortunate, and do not want to identify with our own so-called communities back home. We feel that those communities should be ready for us to come back, and that we will go back only when home is ready to receive us. The question is who can make it ready for us? If we are not concerned about our own brothers and sisters, then who will show concern? We have been blessed, so it is time to go home and help create new avenues to offset our dependant values.

There are certainly differences in the spiritual capacity of the various groups in Africa. The experiences of slavery, slave trade and colonization have arrested cultural development, and led to the near-obliteration of the values and practices of African religious and philosophical thought. The slave trade decimated the population of Africa, as the population was exported to populate other areas of the world.¹⁹

The process of catching slaves for sale required one group of Africans to make war on others. These wars created casualties on both sides. The defeated side lost its members, who were then sold as slaves. Even the victorious side lost some of its most valuable members, while the wounded and the weak were left to their fate. The fear and anxiety engendered by constant warfare were not conducive to orderly development. Until the end of the slave trade, cultural life for most African communities in their new lands was non-existent.²⁰

¹⁹ Institute for Diasporan & African Culture, Winterim lecture series at Akropong Akuapem, December, 2008 - January 2009 winter seminar.

²⁰ Ibid.

By establishing schools that utilized syllabi devoid of African content, the educated African child grew up knowing little about his culture and religion, resulting in a lack of self-awareness. Recognizing that religion was central to African life, missionaries used religion to ‘save’ black souls, causing traditional African religion to be viewed as “pagan and fetishist”.²¹ As a result, traditional African religion was presented in the worst possible light, if at all. Those who were educated by the missionaries went on to teach other Africans how evil their tradition was.

Spirituality has been defined as the totality of rituals, beliefs, practices and behaviour patterns perfected by a community of people throughout the passage of time. It can be used to get in touch with the ultimate source of all energy, as well as a multiplicity of energy patterns, including water, plants, animals, the sun, the moon, air; etc. In the African thought, most spiritual activities have one aim, and that is to reconnect with the Universal Spirit, or *Nyame* (God.)²² The idea of God is expressed in different ways in different African communities. However, the same conditions that militated against the development of traditional indigenous religion are faced by every African community.

The disdain the Europeans had for the native African rituals and festivals has rubbed off on our fellow African Christians. Negative attitudes and comments about these rituals and festivals have resulted in my search for an understanding of some of

²¹ A pagan is a person who lives far away from civilized community – derived from the Latin word *paganus* – a village dweller. Fetishism is the worship of man-made objects such as charms and amulets – derived from the Portuguese word *fetico*.

²² John Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion and Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1991), 11.

these rituals. I was curious about rituals in the Bible, and this made me question why some of us Africans feel that our rituals are “pagan.”

African Christianity

An educated African had other, more pragmatic reasons to accept the new religion and forget his own religious beliefs. Among others, it freed him from the fear of the *abosom*. In traditional African religion, *abosom* are divinities created by God to fulfil specific functions; they do not come into existence by their own volition. They are called by different names. The Akan name for a divinity is *ɔbosom* (singular), *abosom* (plural)²³.

The *abosom* were willing and ready to exact revenge on one’s enemies, and to visit illness and even death on individuals for trivial infractions of the laws of the society, such as stealing from your neighbour’s farm, telling lies, adultery, etc. within a short time of the offence occurring. The priest and priestesses of these *abosom* lived by the strictest principles because of the retribution that could be brought upon them by the divinities; unlike Christians, who by virtue of confession could safely say their sins were forgiven, and then go on to repeat the same sins.

Now the ‘natives’ learned of a new God who, they were assured, would wait for death to occur before judging a person, no matter how heinous the offence or sin committed. It was more comforting and less frightening to place oneself under the protection of this new God. Most importantly, while traditional African religion required positive action, this new religion only required a person to have faith, and say he believed in order to gain salvation from punishment for his sins.

²³ Kofi Asare Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion* (Accra, London: FEP International Private Ltd., 1978), 54.

African clergy of all denominations of the Christian faith, feeling uncomfortable with the total absence of African contribution to their faith, have valiantly tried, but pitifully failed to, in their words, ‘Africanize’ Christianity. Their contributions have only succeeded in effecting cosmetic changes; basic Christian philosophy remains alien. Most theologians cherish doctrine, but ignore local research. Their statements and claims assume that African religion can be known, and that it is well-defined.²⁴

For example, the agenda suggested at the conclusion of the Pan-African Theologians’ conference in Accra in 1973, stated in part, ‘our task as theologians is to create a theology that arises from, and is, ‘accountable to, African people’. To ‘create’ is to ‘bring into existence for the first time’. How can that which ‘arises from the people’ be ‘created’ by theologians? How can the African draw inspiration for uplifting himself if he is engaged in hating himself and devaluing his own achievements? Children of Africa need to embrace the proud consciousness that in their native land were born wise persons, who had attained the heights of Nana (Chieftain), Christ or Buddha, and others who have attained perfection. Africans can demonstrate this recognition now, by no longer naming themselves or their children after the ancestors of other nations.²⁵ The hope is that the problems identified in this research can serve others in their search for the knowledge bequeathed by their ancestors.

Nea onnim n’abosu no ye akoo - Ghanaian Proverb
(*Lack of self knowledge makes one a slave*)

²⁴ TIDAC Theological education lecture series discussions, April 1, 2009 at Christ Church Akropong.

²⁵ Ibid.

The Ghanaian Presbyterian Reformed Church and Bethel Presbyterian Reformed Church of Brooklyn

Due to economic problems in Ghana, many Ghanaians have opted to leave the country. This is why one finds so many Ghanaian Presbyterians throughout the world today.²⁶ Ghanaians always travel with their Christian faith, as stated by John S. Mbiti: “Africans are notoriously religious and they carry their religion with them wherever they go.”²⁷ These Ghanaian immigrants have ended up being segregated from other churches, because they did not feel welcome when they attended the other churches.

The Presbyterian Church’s influence in the world community is quite extensive. Ghanaian Presbyterians found it easy to establish connections with other Presbyterian churches in the Diaspora. One such connection is the church of which I am a member in New York: Bethel Presbyterian Reformed Church of Brooklyn, formerly the Ghanaian Presbyterian Reformed Church of Brooklyn. The Ghanaian Presbyterian Reformed Church of Brooklyn is located at 890 Flatbush Avenue, in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn, at the corners of Flatbush and Church Avenues. The Ghanaian Presbyterian Reformed Church of Brooklyn is an immigrant church, with a congregation that is 95% Ghanaian. The church is located in a lively community of commercial storefronts and single and-two-family residences, with a few multiple-dwelling buildings.

The Ghanaian Presbyterian Reformed Church of Brooklyn has remained predominantly Ghanaian, and even though the Brooklyn church originally formed as a

²⁶ From conversations with different Ghanaian immigrants in my Church and elsewhere.

²⁷ John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion* 2d Edition (Nigeria: Heinemann, 1991), 45-47; Lamin Sanneh, *West African Christianity: The Religious Impact* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1983) (German missionaries went to Akropong in the Akuapem mountains in 1835. But they did not convert many of my people until they had the help of West Indian settlers. The first converts in Akropong were not baptized until 1847 – twelve years later. Africans did not trust the European’s deliverance of the word of God.).

splinter group from the Manhattan church in 1991, it has not attracted other ethnic groups. The Ghanaian population of the congregation is 95%, and the other 5% is split between other ethnic groups. So, how do we attract other ethnic groups into our midst, and why can we not attract other ethnic groups? I believe that there are several reasons why other ethnic groups have not been attracted to our church. We will examine this by looking at the history of the Ghanaian Presbyterian Church. It plays a major role in the way the church worships today.

History of the Ghanaian Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn (Bethel)

There are many different ethnic groups in Ghana. Due to the success of the Presbyterian Church of Akropong, which is 175 years old, members of other Presbyterian groups went there to train, and after graduation, returned home to teach the gospel in their communities. In this way, Presbyterianism became the dominant organized religion in Ghana. Most hymns used for church worship were German songs that had been translated into local dialects. Some of these hymns touched on the typical lives of the local societies in Ghana. It was often the aspiration of the average person, at that time, to graduate from Akropong Training College, and after a few years as a teacher and some remedial courses, to be ordained as a pastor.

Most people were happy to become Presbyterians, because it was the only organized religion at that time and offered the opportunity of becoming a missionary, or teacher, which was another mode of missionary life. In addition to Sunday worship, social programs were organized by the Church, and since these were beneficial to the people, joining the Presbyterian Church was important to most people. By 1905, almost every district in southern Ghana had a Presbyterian mission with schools, and these

shaped the culture of various communities. Since that time, the Presbyterian religion has been passed on from generation to generation.

The Presbyterian presence in Ghana is quite established, so many Ghanaians who felt lost in the American system were attracted to the Ghanaian church in Manhattan when it was established. The location of the Ghanaian church in Manhattan was good for most of the people coming from the boroughs of New York. A few of the leaders met and established a worship group. They would meet once a month at Columbia University, where church services were held in one of the campus buildings. This group became quite successful. It attracted a lot of Ghanaians from the different boroughs, and continued to meet every month for about three years. From this group emerged several worship groups that serve other New York boroughs.

A problem emerged when some members found it difficult to attend the Manhattan church. Those traveling from Brooklyn and Queens traveled from a two-fare zone on the bus, and often arrived late to church, sometimes missing the beginning of the service. So, they requested to create another church location in Brooklyn, to accommodate members traveling from Brooklyn and Queens. This, the leaders refused to do. So, three female members who resided in Brooklyn decided to start a new church in Brooklyn anyway. During their search for leadership, they approached the Rev. Obiri Addo, who was then a Professor of Theology at Drew University.

Reverend Obiri and two other students, Rev. Akwasi Aboagye and Rev. Helena Opoku, were assigned to assist two Elders – Ben Djolito and Catechist Michael Ofori Mankata, to become the new leadership of the church in Brooklyn. They approached the

Presbytery of the New York Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) and the Classis²⁸ of the Reformed Church of Brooklyn (RCA) for assistance.

A task force was created with three members of the New York Presbytery, three members of the Reformed Church and three Elders to represent the church, namely: Ben Djolito, Ofori Mankata and Rev. Obiri Addo. The task force was set to work with the local leadership of the church, and lead an outside search for a competent pastor to oversee the church.

The current Pastor was recommended by the task force, and appointed by the Presbytery of New York as the organizing Pastor, which is a constitutional position. The Pastor is called to develop a church until it is ready for chartering and the call to serve is received from the Presbytery. One requirement for a pastor is that he should be a Ghanaian who can speak Twi, Ga and English, and have experience in church development and supervision. Every three months, the Pastor is required to send a report on the status of the church's development to the Church Presbytery.

The funding of the church came from grants approved by the Reformed Church (RCA) and the Presbytery of New York (PCUSA). At every level of development, these two groups give monies for expenditure distribution. These grants go to the central account, from which funds are disbursed for salaries and general expenditure. These grants are to be advanced on a sliding scale and are scheduled to terminate after five years. In a similar manner, involvement from the church increases from nothing in the first year, to full involvement after five years. After five years, the church ceases to receive any money from the Presbytery. Following these guidelines, the church, in its

²⁸ The Classis is a body within the Presbytery of the Reformed Church.

third year, was able to gain enough financial ground to support it, and the pastor and church no longer received grants from the two grantors. Over the years, the Church voted to change its name to Bethel Presbyterian Reformed Church.

Issues Faced by Bethel Reformed Church today – Silent Exodus of the Youth from Our Churches

One of the books I wrote a critique on, and which struck a chord within me is Peter Cha's *Ethnic Identity Formation and Participation in Immigrant Churches*. This book outlines some of the same difficulties our church is facing with our youth, including that of identity crisis; feeling torn between two cultures, and not knowing where you really belong. Cha outlines a significant development, described as the "silent exodus" of second generation Korean-American young adults from their home churches.²⁹ This is also happening in my church. In the book, Cha examines the "broader developmental experiences of second-generation young people" to examine why so many young people are leaving their ethnic churches. The author explores the dialectical relationship between 1) ethnic identity formation and 2) spiritual identity formation.³⁰

One of the two models used in the research distinguishes four forms of ethnic identity among Asian Americans, namely: traditionalist, assimilationist, bicultural and marginal (S. Sue and D.W. Sue, 1971,) and the second theoretical model, Minority Identity Development (MID) by Atkinson, Marten & Sue, in 1989 can be used for all immigrants. It also applies to the Ghanaian-American immigrants in my church. The MID states that members of the minorities in the United States go through a process in

²⁹ Peter T. Cha. *Ethnic Identity Formation and Participation in Immigrant Churches, Korean Americans and their Religions*, edited by Ho Youri Kwan et al. (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 141.

³⁰ Cha, *Ethnic Identity Formation*, 141

which they seek to understand themselves, their minority culture, the dominant culture and the relationship between the two cultures. This model consists of five developmental stages: conformity, dissonance, resistance and immersion, introspection, and integration and awareness.³¹

The study reveals several parallels to my church. From the experiences described by the study's respondents, it is easy to see how the second-generation immigrant children in my church feel, and how their experiences are similar to those of the youth mentioned in the book. Reading this chapter has caused me to re-examine what is happening in my church. We find that there is a need to provide incentives and interesting ways to gain and maintain the attention of the second generation Ghanaian – American youth in our church. This is a challenge for the leaders of the church. Some of the experiences described by the respondents in Cha's book would elicit similar responses from the youth of our own church.

Many have voiced similar misgivings, such as not understanding part of the church services that are spoken in the Ghanaian Twi dialect. Other sentiments expressed by the first-generation immigrants are prevalent elsewhere in our society, especially when discussing prestigious schools. The 'silent exodus' is also happening in our church – where at a certain point, youth stop going to church altogether. It feels alien to them, but often they find their way back to the church, realizing that there is some comfort to be derived by coming back. We must concentrate on how to bridge the gap between when they leave the church completely, and when they return.

The Future of Bethel Reformed Church Today

³¹ Ibid. 143.

The future of the church lies with the youth, and we have a very supportive youth group, which at the same time is not inclined to embrace traditional Ghanaian culture. They detest the way the church organizes things. The fact that they are children of immigrant families seems to have a bearing on how they feel about Ghanaian culture. Being born here, they would rather have things done the American way and so we have to be careful as to how we impose the culture on them. The men's fellowship, women's fellowship and the church leaders have all contributed greatly to the church's ministries and will continue to do so.

The location of our church may also place impediments in the way of attracting other ethnic groups to our church. With so many churches in the neighborhood (over 35) all the ethnic groups have their choice of which church to attend. If our church had been one of only two in the area, with perhaps a synagogue nearby, it would be easier to attract members. The message is also important, because if the message is right, the people will come regardless of how many other churches there are.

The name of our church does not make it attractive to other ethnic groups. The name distinguishes the church just as a Jewish temple would. It tells people of other ethnic groups that this is a Ghanaian church – not a church of God where everyone is welcome, but a church only for Ghanaian people, so everyone else should find their own. If the church really wants to attract other ethnic groups, it will have to change its name. The Session has voted to change the name of the church by taking “Ghanaian” out of the name and calling it Bethel Presbyterian Reformed Church.

There is a lack of targeted outreach programs, and this is an issue that needs to be addressed in order to attract more people into the fold. Even if outreach is only targeted

toward Ghanaians, there are more Ghanaians in New York who could be coming to our church. Getting a congregation of close to 600 would not be too optimistic, but an effort needs to be planned and very deliberate steps taken to achieve this goal.

There is an estimated Ghanaian population of about 70,000 in New York alone, so this number can easily be achieved if the right steps are taken. The church has plans to put in a soup kitchen, as well as programs such as counseling centers, that will benefit the homeless and the poor in the area. This will develop ties with the community, touching on all aspects of injustice and poverty. We will also be able to direct people in the community with information on where they can go for help.

The church's history has already been touched on at the beginning of this paper. There has been no connection between the people of Africa, and their brothers who were taken into other places all over the world. That has become an issue.

Akropong Christ Church

The Presbyterian Church was established when the missionaries first came to my hometown of Akropong in 1825 and set up their mission. This part of town, which is in the Eastern region of Ghana, has been famous for its Presbyterianism; one is known to be honest and blessed for being from that part of town³². One of the prominent churches in Akropong Township is Christ Church, of which I have been a member since childhood. I worship there on every visit to Ghana.

The Akropong Christ Church is the most significant Presbyterian Church in the history of the Gold Coast (modern day Ghana). Located where the early Basel Missionaries first started their evangelical work, Christ Church became central to the spread of the gospel and the establishment of the Church. But when the missionaries taught Christianity to my ancestors, they failed to inculturate the Traditional Religion of Onyamesom in some of its festivals and rituals that had been practiced by our ancestors for centuries. It seems the missionaries wanted to replace the Festivals and Rituals of the African Traditional Religion with Christian Festivals and Rituals, like Christmas, Lent, and Easter – just a few of the Christian Festivals and Rituals, because they did not understand our tradition and culture.

After hearing about the Asafosa Peace Ritual of the Township of Mamfe the Akuapem District in the Eastern region of Ghana, I felt the need to:

- 1) Explore the Traditional Religion further; and
- 2) Investigate the similarities between Onyamesom and Kristosom to deepen the faith of the Christian congregation of the churches of

³² Noel Smith, “The Churches,” in David Brokensha, ed., *Akwapim Handbook* (Tema, Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1972), 65.

Bethel Presbyterian Reformed Church in Brooklyn New York and
Christ Church in Akropong, Ghana.

Finally, I find myself caught between the influences of the message from the Basel Missionaries and the Traditional African Religion because of these three factors:

1. As a member of Christ Church from childhood and still a member when I pay a visit to Ghana,
2. As an active member of Bethel Presbyterian Reformed Church in Brooklyn, New York; and
3. Having lived in the African Traditional setting prior to relocating to the United States of America.

This quest is to seek answers for some of the questions I have had for a very long time. I left Ghana for economic stability still with the lingering thought of ATR and Christianity conflict. My interest in pursuing this particular subject stems from what I see as a deviation from our African culture. Members of Bethel Reformed Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn come to church every Sunday to worship as Christians, but without any outreach programs for the community, and without any connection to African Traditional Religion. Are we committed Christians and if we are, where are the good works that Jesus preached about?

I hope that my project and its subsequent dissemination will inspire members to develop these programs, because it is through ministry that one can lead a life pleasing to God. My research and subsequent dissemination of my findings will help my fellow congregants to be better Christians, and to know and accept that God should be worshipped at all times, and not just on Sundays.

Onyamesom

African Traditional Religion - The God of the African

A close observation of Africa and its societies will reveal that religion is at the root of African culture and is the determining principle of African Life. It is no exaggeration, therefore, to say that in traditional Africa, religion is life and life, religion.³³

According to John Mbiti, ceremonies and festivals are essential to the practice of African religion. These include praying, making sacrifices and offerings, performing ceremonies and rituals, and observing various customs. Festivals are joyful occasions where people sing, dance, and eat to celebrate a particular occasion or event. For example, there are festivals to mark harvest time, the start of the rainy season, the birth of a child, and victory over enemies.³⁴

Whatever they do, Africans are engaged in religion – whether it is farming, fishing, hunting; or simply eating, drinking or traveling.³⁵ Religion gives meaning and significance to their lives, both in this world and the next. In other words, as Professor Idowu so aptly puts it, Africans are “a people who in all things are religious”³⁶

Robert Moffat, a nineteenth century missionary amongst the Bechuanas, Hottentots and Bushmen in South Africa, wrote that “Satan had erased every vestige of religious impression from their minds.” Other writers justify the European presence and mission to Africa by meticulously documenting what appeared to be crude and barbarous practices and rituals confirming the supposed disjuncture between the European and

³³ Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion*, 1.

³⁴ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion and Philosophy*, 11.

³⁵ Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion*, 16.

³⁶ Ibid.

African mind.³⁷ In doing so they portrayed Africa as in the words of Stanley, a “place governed by insensible fetish”.³⁸ There was also a tendency, especially among Christian theologians, to approach traditional African religion via doctrine rather than practice, and to conclude that African Traditional Religion offered no systematically expounded theology.³⁹ Such approaches create confusion in the formulation of religion, since theology would argue that the most significant factor in religion is theory.

Mbonu Ojike wrote that “If religion consists in deifying one character and crusading around the world to make him acceptable to mankind, then the African has no religion. But if religion means doing, rather than talking, then the African has a religion.”⁴⁰ Most early studies on the terminologies of traditional African religion bequeathed terms which are fundamentally inadequate, and often prejudicial to actualities. We need to critically examine the terms used, and clear misconceptions in order to gain better understanding. The misconceptions contained in books written by non-Africans may always haunt us. Currently, most African writers, scholars, students and Christians perpetuate these misconceptions, without realizing their adverse effects.

African Traditional Religion (ATR)

Onyamesom – Pre-Christian worship of God by African ancestors

More people in Ghana speak Akan than any other language. “*Onyame*” means God in the Akan language and “*som*” means worship in the Akan language. In a way, God is present in every aspect of our lives. This way of life culminates in African

³⁷ Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion*, 54.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 1.

Traditional Religion. For all intents and purposes, *Onyamesom* is the African Traditional Religion which is practiced by the Akan people of Ghana.

According to Thomas C. Oden, Africa played a decisive role in the formation of Christian culture. Decisive intellectual achievements of Christianity were understood in Africa before being recognized in Europe and a millennium before finding their way to North Africa.⁴¹ The profound ways that African teachers have shaped Christianity have never been adequately acknowledged. Ancient African tradition, which draws its meaning from *Onyamesom*, is what young Africans should rediscover for its rich textual value in our current society. By reevaluating prejudicial assumptions that ignore or demean *Onyamesom* or African religious traditions, new values can be shaped.⁴²

The story of *Onyamesom* or traditional African religion needs to be told. African children need to understand that before the missionaries came to Africa; our ancestors were worshipping God in their own way, a way that must be acceptable to God. There must be a reason why God created people in a specific location, with their own background and cultures. When any groups of people are able to identify with what God has given them in their locality, then they may acknowledge the creator in a way that maximizes the unique reason of their being.

Many African scholars and church leaders have ignored their ancestors' belief in *Onyamesom*, condemning them so that they are invisible in the annals of history. *Onyamesom*/African Traditional Religion is no less ecumenical by having grown up on a particular continent, but has arisen out of distinctly African experience, on African soil.

⁴¹ Thomas C. Oden, *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Books, 2007), 9.

⁴² Ibid.

Those who have most suffered for its genuine depths and continuity have been born African, and have nurtured African culture throughout untold generations of indigenous African experience.⁴³

Some who live on the African continent are uncomfortable being identified as African. They prefer to be identified as Ugandans, Egyptians or Nigerians, but the most fitting way of describing all these millennia of ancient and modern cultures remains the term African, whatever its etymology may be.⁴⁴ By dividing Africa into segments, our unity is broken. By making ethnic identity more valuable than the group, (which is the soul of all people of African descent), we lose the sense of a single united people. Africa has a very rich heritage. The link between African forefathers and mothers, ancestors and their descendants forms a rich heritage that their descendants can cherish. According to studies, the development of man began in east Africa. There are traces of human habitation throughout Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania dating from about two million years ago.⁴⁵

Over millennia, a great diversity of people sprang up throughout the world, in Africa as elsewhere.⁴⁶ The African heritage spread westwards across the Atlantic Ocean to South America, the West Indies and North America.⁴⁷ Much of the African heritage exported to the outside world was cultural and religious.⁴⁸ The African evolution has

⁴³ Oden, *The Christian Mind*, 13.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 17.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 13.

⁴⁶ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 2.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 3.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

influenced popular music and dance, including worship in the form of the Negro spirituals of Black Americans in the United States. So our heritage was not only beneficial to Africa, but also the world.

Every group of people has a culture that changes with time. As people move from one place to another, they experience new ways of life that can be manifested in their own art, literature, dance, music, and drama, styles of building homes and clothing, ethics, social organization, political system, and philosophy. In the African tradition, some proverbs teach new things to the hearer, while others warn against evil conduct; some proverbs are used to encourage people to do something, while others show what is bound to happen under certain circumstances.⁴⁹ With religion permeating all areas of life, it has dominated the thinking of African peoples to such an extent that it has shaped culture, social life, political organizations and economic activities.

In the African Traditional Religion, God is outside the pantheon of gods, as He is the eternal Creator of all the other gods and of men and the universe. This makes Him absolutely unique, and He is differentiated from the other gods by having the special name of *Onyame* – the Supreme Being, God the Creator of all things, the Deity.⁵⁰ Taking Africa as a whole, there are in reality five component elements that go into the making of African Traditional Religion/*Onyamesom*. These are: belief in God, belief in the divinities; belief in spirit beings; belief in ancestors and the practice of magic and medicine.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 8.

⁵⁰ Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion*, 1.

⁵¹ T.N.O. Quarcoopome, *West African Traditional Religion* (Ibadan: African University Press, 1987), 40.

God is supreme, and above all, He is the creator and controller of the universe. He is the sovereign ruler of the universe, the king, omnipotent, omniscient, transcendent, compassionate, judge, holy and immortal.⁵² He still maintains contact with the universe either directly through his personal intervention, or indirectly through his personal intermediaries, the divinities and ancestors. God can be approached at all times because He is close enough to hear, and at all stages, man's life depends upon him.⁵³

Divinities are children of God, brought into being during creation, and are next to God. Divinities or traditional gods are thought to be in a father/son relationship with God. They have derived powers, and are functionaries in the theocratic governance of the world. They serve as His ministers, and possess their own divine powers.⁵⁴ Acting as intermediaries between God and man, and having divine attributes as natural spirits, they act on and have their temporary dwelling in objects such as rivers, lakes, lagoons, streams, forest groves, mountains, hills, etc.⁵⁵

According to T.N.O Quarcoopome, contrary to the teachings of Christianity and Islam that the divinities are the agents of the devil and therefore rivals of God, the theology of the Traditional Religion teaches that the divinities are the children of God.⁵⁶ Since the divinities derive their existence from God, they do not have absolute existence, unlike the biblical gods (like Baal in the Old Testament) who claim absolute existence.

⁵² Quarcoopome, *West African Traditional Religion*, 70

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 41.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

The African divinities are there because God is there; they exist because God exists.⁵⁷

Since God may be worshipped indirectly through them, worship is given to these divinities daily, weekly and annually, by traditional priestess in shrines, temples or groves. Divinities can be good or bad spirits, and have the power to appear in any shape, or take the form of an object where they reside, good or bad. We influence the outcome; since we have the image of God in us, we control the outcome with our thought processes, whether positive or negative.

Ghosts or spirits are those who die an accursed death, such as hanging, drowning, from an incurable disease like leprosy; or during pregnancy⁵⁸ (similar to a poltergeist.) Their spirits may wander about aimlessly, haunting places such as trees, rivers, water courses or hills.⁵⁹ It is believed that in certain cases, these spirit beings molest people by entering animals, birds or snakes. There is also a “born to die” spirit that can enter an unborn child in order to cause its death, as well as dwarfs, who are tiny people that remain invisible, but may reveal themselves to people of their choice, sometimes causing mischief and at other times helping.

Ancestors and heroes from various tribes are believed to acquire extra-human powers in the after-life, and with these powers they intervene in the lives of the living.⁶⁰ They also act as intermediaries between God, divinities and men. They are an unseen presence at family or tribal meetings, and serve as guardians and policemen of public

⁵⁷ Quarcoopome, *West African Traditional Religion*, 71.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 41.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 43.

morality.⁶¹ They can punish or reward by causing disease and crop failures, or a bountiful harvest and good health. They are venerated at annual festivals, when supplications are made to them to ensure procreation, peace and prosperity.⁶² Because of this belief, magic objects such as charms, talisman and amulets are used for protection against evil forces, and to achieve success in life.⁶³

In African belief, medicine is closely associated with religion, because it is the possession of the divine healer (i.e. God), who dispenses it through the agency of the divinities and other spirits, and they in turn make the knowledge available to priests and medicine men.⁶⁴ In African Traditional Religion, all components are interrelated, because the world is under one single control. God and man are linked through the entire structure of the universe. The functional responsibility of Spirits is to help man connect with God.

The ancestors are personal beings with a special relationship to man, and they act as intermediaries between the living, divinities and God. Magic and medicine also help to bring man into contact with God. They are man's means of utilizing the forces of the universe for his well-being.⁶⁵

The author T.N.O. Quarcoopome states these reasons to study African Traditional Religion:

1. To help Africans reconstruct their past in order to understand the present, and to effectively plan for the future in the political,

⁶¹ Quarcoopome, *West African Traditional Religion*.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., 44.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 45.

social and economic spheres of life.

2. To help the African in his search for self-determination and self-assertion, and to project his distinctive personality.
3. To make known the world- view of the African, so that outsiders may understand the social and moral behavior of the African, which might seem strange.
4. To make scientific comparison with other religions, and know that all religions share three basic elements (belief in God, man's separation from him, and the way back to God). The means differ but the end is the same; thus making room for sympathy and empathy.
5. To correct misconceptions about African Traditional Religion by Western investigators, missionaries and educated Africans. These fall into three stages:
 - a. The age of ignorance:
 - b. The period of doubt and resisted illumination and
 - c. The period of intellectual dilemma, leading to derogatory terminologies like paganism, idolatry, heathenism, fetishism, animism, etc.⁶⁶

Some of the derogatory terminologies explained by Mr. Quarcoopome are as follows:

1. Primitive - Latin definition meaning originally early, ancient or primary. Used by Europeans and Europeanized Africans to make people of other cultures believe they are inferior, while posing as superior.
2. Paganism - Latin word meaning village dweller or country man; a person living far away from the civilized community. "Pagan" was originally used as a sociological distinction between the sophisticated and enlightened city dweller and the unsophisticated and unenlightened village dweller; used in religion to denote those who do not acknowledge Jehovah, Christ, Allah, or a non-Christian.
3. Heathenism - German word meaning a wasteland where criminals stay. This heathen is a person who demonstrates the characteristics of a heath dweller as contrasted with the enlightened city dweller.

⁶⁶ Quarcoopome, *West African Traditional Religion*, 45.

4. Idolatry - Greek definition meaning images, shapes, phantoms; a representation of other things: symbol or portrait of a god, and later false god. In religion it indicates the worship of false gods.
5. Animism - a Latin definition - anima meaning breath of life or spirit or soul. Edward Taylor's theory suggests that animism is the ability of spirits to inhabit living and non-living things.
6. Polytheism - Greek definition (Poly + Theo) meaning worship of several gods. Chief characteristic of polytheism is the absence of a transcendental reality as in Greek religion where gods are of the same rank and file.⁶⁷

The idea that God is the Creator of the world and everything in it is fundamental to the religious beliefs of African peoples. Each society has its own myths which tell of how the world was created, and the order in which the creator carried out His work of creation.⁶⁸

It is also a widespread view among African people that God continues to create. Some accounts say that the entire universe was created in one act. Thus the creation of the Universe did not end in the distant past; it is an ongoing process which will never end. In many African societies, it is believed that the universe is divisible into two parts. These are the visible and the invisible parts, or the heavens (or sky) and the earth.⁶⁹ The earth too is full of created things. Some African peoples regard it as a living being and call it "mother earth (*Asaase Yaa*)", "the goddess earth" or "the divinity of the earth". Symbolically, it is looked on as the mother of the universe, while the heavenly part is the Father.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Quarcoopome, *West African Traditional Religion*, 45-49.

⁶⁸ Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion*, 19.

⁶⁹ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 35.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 36.

Man, who lives on the earth, is the center of the universe. He is also like the priest, linking the universe with God, its creator. Man awakens the universe, he speaks to it, he listens to it, he tries to create a harmony with the universe.⁷¹ The universe is considered to be unending in terms of both space and time. Nobody can reach the edge of the universe since it has no known edge or rim. Events come and go in the form of minor and major rhythms. The minor rhythms are found in the lives of the living things of this earth such as men, animals and plants during their birth, growth, procreation and death.⁷² The major rhythms of time are events like day and night, the months (reckoned on the basis of the phases of the moon), the seasons of rain and of dry weather, and the events of nature which come and go at greater intervals, such as the flowering of certain plants, the migration of certain birds and insects, famines and the movements of certain heavenly bodies.⁷³

In the African view, the universe is both visible and invisible, without limit. Since it was created by God, it is dependent on Him for its continuity. God is the sustainer, the keeper and upholder of the universe.⁷⁴

It is considered that the universe is orderly, and as long as this order is not upset, there is harmony. First there is order in the laws of nature, giving a sense of security and certainty. Secondly, there is a moral order at work among people. It is believed by African peoples, that God gave morality to people so that they might live happily and in harmony with one another. Through this moral order, customs and institutions have

⁷¹ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 36.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 37.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

arisen in all societies, to safeguard the life of the individual and the community of which he is a part.⁷⁵

Thirdly, there is a religious order in the universe; the laws of nature are regarded as being controlled by God directly, or through His servants. The morals and institutions of society are thought to have been given by God, sanctioned by Him. Therefore, taboos exist to strengthen the keeping of moral and religious order.⁷⁶ Fourthly, there is a mystical order governing the universe. The belief in this order is shown clearly in the practice of traditional medicine, magic, witchcraft and sorcery. In all African societies, it is believed that that all power in the universe comes from God. It is a mystical power, hidden and mysterious. This power is available to spirits, and to certain human beings.⁷⁷ Certain human beings possess special powers for working in the positive or negative realm.

Man at the Center of the Universe

According to John Mbiti, as the creator of the universe, God is outside and beyond it, but in African myths of creation, man puts himself at the center of the universe. It is as if the whole world exists for man's sake. Therefore African peoples look for the usefulness (or otherwise) of the universe to man. This means both what the world can do for man, and how man can use the world for his own good. This attitude towards the universe is deeply engrained in African peoples.

For that reason, many have, for example, divided animals into those which man can eat and those which he cannot eat. Others look at plants in terms of what can be

⁷⁵ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 41.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 43.

eaten by people, what can be used for curative or medical purposes, what can be used for building, fire and so on. Certain things have physical uses; some have religious uses (for ceremonies, rituals and symbols); and other things are used for medicinal and magical purposes. African peoples regard natural objects and phenomena as being inhabited by living things, or having a mystical life.⁷⁸ God is the source of all life.⁷⁹

Being in that position, he tries to use the universe or derive some use from it in physical, mystical and supernatural ways. He sees the universe in terms of himself and endeavors to live in harmony with it. Man is not the master in the universe; he is only the center, the friend, the beneficiary, the user. For that reason, he has to live in harmony with the universe, obeying the laws of natural, moral and mystical order. If these are unduly disturbed, it is man who suffers most.⁸⁰

God in the belief of the African

Africans believe that God is the creator of the universe and has absolute control of the universe; He receives direct worship but is also worshipped through divinities and ancestors. He is believed to be approachable in all occasions of life, and is never taken for granted. How the belief in God originated is not known.

According to John Mbiti, there are three possible explanations for the origin of belief in God:

- 1) Through reflection on the universe.
- 2) Realization that this vast and complex universe must have an origin. Through imagination, humans reached the conclusion that there must have

⁷⁸ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 42.

⁷⁹ Albin K. Korem and Mawutodzi A. Abbissath, *Traditional Wisdom in African Proverbs* (Accra, Ghana: Publishing Trends, Ltd., 2004), 43.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

been someone who originated it, and they began to consider this someone as God.

- 3) It became both logical and necessary, therefore, for people to believe in God.
- 4) Man saw how limited his powers and knowledge were. This was particularly in the face of death, calamity, and the forces of nature.
- 5) This may easily have led people to speculate that there must be someone greater than themselves, and greater than the world, who had full control over it.⁸¹ The belief in God may have been suggested by the powers of the weather, storms, thunder and lightning, and the phenomena of day and night, together with the expanse of the sky with its sun, moon and stars. People's thoughts were, therefore, drawn towards the sky for more reasons than one.⁸²

The Akan concept of man and his destiny

The Akan believe that man is both a biological and a spiritual being. The biological nature of man is represented by the blood (*Mogya*). The spiritual side of man is represented by three entities:

1. The spirit (*Sunsum*),
2. The father's spirit (*Ntoro*) and
3. The soul (*Okra*.)

The blood, which represents the physical part of the body, is transmitted by the mother. The mother-child bond makes a man a member of his mother's family, lineage, clan and tribe. It identifies his relationship with his kinfolk and the society at large. The link between one generation and another is thus through the female line. This fact accounts for the matrilineal system of inheritance, where a man is inherited by the children of his

⁸¹ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 46.

⁸² Ibid.

sister. The sister is thought to carry the family blood, and in this way it is transmitted to her children.⁸³

The spirit or *sunsum* is the ego. This accounts for the character (*Suban*), disposition and intelligence of a person. It is subject to change, and through training, is fully capable of changing from light (timid) to heavy (courageous.) Thus the *sunsum* is reflected in the moral qualities of a person. For the Ashantis, their collective *sunsum* is embodied in the Golden Stool. From the father, a man is thought to receive his personality life force or spirit (*Ntoro*). This *ntoro* is identified with the male sperm. It is thus transmitted by the father to his children. The *ntoro* accounts for the inherited characteristics often displayed by the offspring. The father-child bond is therefore spiritual. From the *ntoro* concept, the Akans derive twelve patrilineal groups.⁸⁴

The last spiritual component of man is the soul (*Okra*). This is the vitalizing life force in man. It is given directly by God. It is the last act of creation. It is said to be that part of God in every man that makes him a living being. Its departure from the body means death. The soul is thus divine, and returns to God at death. It is immortal. The soul is also the guardian spirit, or protector. It may give a man good advice, encouraging him to succeed in life, or it may neglect him, causing his undertakings to fail. Before the soul leaves God to inhabit the body, it receives its destiny. Thus, the soul is intimately connected with the destiny of man. Destiny among the Akans is known as *Nkrabea* (referred to on page 35).

⁸³ Quarcoopome, *West African Traditional Religion* 105.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 105.

This word is made up of *Kra* (to bid farewell or to take leave of) and *Bea* (the way or manner of doing something, or a place). Thus *nkrabea* literally means the way or manner in which the soul bids farewell to *Onyame* before its departure into world. In short, *nkrabea* describes the soul's place, or lot in this world. This destiny is fixed beforehand and is therefore unalterable. Hence the saying, "The destiny given to man by God cannot be changed." A person may die prematurely without fulfilling his or her destiny. Such a situation merely postpones the destiny of the individual, since he or she will reincarnate to complete an uncompleted destiny.⁸⁵

The Rites of Passage

The life-cycle of man runs from the cradle to the grave. In the traditional African setting, the landmarks in this life cycle are birth, puberty, marriage and death. The arrival of a child in the family is one of the greatest blessings of life. African peoples greet this event with joy and satisfaction, thus great care is taken during the pregnancy to protect and safeguard mother and baby.⁸⁶ The first eight days after birth are considered the most critical. This is because the newborn is regarded as a visitor from the ghost world, and it is not certain whether his ghost parents will come and take him back.

For this reason, the child is kept indoors and is not cuddled till the eighth day. If the child dies before the eighth day it is believed that its ghost parents were responsible, and the parents are not allowed to cry. They are advised to forget everything, and start over. When a child survives the eighth day, then it's a sure sign that he/she has come to stay.⁸⁷ In most African societies, the baby is given a name through a naming ceremony

⁸⁵ Quarcoopome, *West African Traditional Religion*, 107.

⁸⁶ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 90.

⁸⁷ Quarcoopome, *West African Traditional Religion*, 111.

attended by members of the family, relatives, neighbors and friends. At this time, the child is “outdoored”⁸⁸, in addition to receiving a name.

Among the Akans the child is hailed by its ‘soul’ name – for example, *Kwaku* for a male born on Wednesday, and *Akua* for a female born on Wednesday. The name is considered to be very much part of the personality of the person. Therefore it is taken seriously, and chosen with care. Names carry meaning, and so must be given due consideration. Gifts in cash and clothing are also given to the couple⁸⁹.

Akan Male and Female Kra (Soul) Names

According to a prevalent system among the Akan people, the first name of every child derives from the day on which he or she was born. The male and female names corresponding to the names of the seven days of the week as well as their honorific addresses or responses are displayed in Table 2.1 (given slight local variations).⁹⁰

⁸⁸ The child naming celebration is known as the “outdooring” of the child because this is when the child is brought outside the house. The baby is usually kept inside the house until the eighth day.

⁸⁹ Quarcoopome, *West African Traditional Religion*, 111.

⁹⁰ Oduro-Mensah, *Akanism and Hebrewism* 17.

Traditional Akan Male and Female Day Names

<i>Name of Day</i>	<i>Male Name</i>	<i>Female Name</i>	<i>Address of Appellation</i>
Kwasiada (Sunday) Koyasiada	Kwasi , Akwasi	Akosua Asi , Akwasia	Yaa-Awusi Yaa-Awasi
Dwoada (Monday) Yuda	Kwadwo, Awua Kwawiau , Kwayu	Adwoa, (Awia), Ayua	Yaa-Adwo Yaa-Ayu
Benada (Tuesday) Ben(e)ada , Beda	Kwabena Kwabeda , Kwabe	Abena Abeda , Abea	Yaa-Abena Yaa-Abeda
Wukuada (Wednesday) Yukuda	Kwaku, Kwawuku Kwayuku	Akua, Ayukua Awukua	Yaa-Aku Yaa-Awuku
Yawoada (Thursday) Yawoda	Yaw(o), Kwaw(o) Kwayawo	Aya, Awo, Ayawoa , Yaa	Yaa-Awo Yaa-yaa
Fiada (Friday) Fida	Kwafi , (Kwaofi) Kwafie, Kofie, Kofi	Afua, Afia	Yaa-Afi
(Saturday) Memenda, Memeeda, Memenada	Kwamemen Kwamen (Kwame)	Amma Amemena	Yaa-Amen Yaa-Ame

NB - Likely original Akan male/female names and their appellations;
those which have become corrupted over the ages are in bold letters

It can be seen from the table that the day name of a male child born on Saturday, Kwame, whose address is Amen, is the same as the Akan day name of God, Kwame, and the same appellation Amen, a term which is also exactly the same in spelling as the biblical Amen (interestingly the same use and meaning too!). Akans therefore regard God as a male being; one whose special day or "birthday" is Saturday.

Marriage

Marriage is an integral part of the social cycle, through which everyone is expected to pass. The various puberty rites are all performed to ensure a happy, stable and successful marriage. From the traditional point of view, marriage is a social rather than an individual affair. It is a social contract, in which the lineage of the contracting

parties is greatly interested. Though marriage may be contracted at any age, it may not be consummated till one has reached the age of puberty, and has been initiated into adulthood. Marriage contracts take various forms. Infant marriage is practiced among some members of the Akan tribe, when a parent is impressed by the handsomeness, resourcefulness, courage wealth or eloquence of a man. They may promise him their daughter, who is yet to be born, in a marital contract. This kind of marriage is not binding on either side, and may be broken unilaterally.⁹¹

The initiative for finding a suitable partner begins with the man's family, through his father, mother, uncle or some relative. The girl is suggested to the boy. Then, acting as a group, they approach the girl's family and ask for her hand. The girl's family would ask for time to consider the matter. They may spend a week to three months arriving at a decision. Meanwhile each group will make inquiries about the other to determine the suitability of the marriage. Investigations are made regarding hereditary issues pertaining to character, and so on. Any gifts given during this time are returned should the marriage fall through.

The marriage ceremony is a simple affair, consisting of payment of the bridewealth⁹² (dowry) and its acceptance by the girl's family. A day is fixed, and the families of the contracting parties come together. There is always a group who is unrelated to either party, who act as witnesses to the marriage. The presence of the man and woman may be required, so that they may give their final word before all. The most

⁹¹ Quarcoopome, *West African Traditional Religion*, 111.

⁹² These are the "gifts" the bride receives from her future husband. The bride's family benefits as well.

important thing is to gain the consent of all four parties – the girl, her people, and the boy and his people.⁹³

The Akan require that the boy bring two pots of palm wine, some money according to the social status of the girl's family, a trunk, bottles of rum, beer, soft drinks and if a Christian, a Bible. The palm wine is known as the 'head wine.' This is poured out to the ancestors, to seal the contract. Blessings are asked from the divine beings, to grant them long life and to bless them with many children. Permission is also sought from the ancestors to give the girl in marriage. The rest of the drink is shared with those who are present at the ceremony. They, along with the ancestral spirits, become witnesses to the marriage contract. The marriage can therefore be consummated that night, after the ceremony.⁹⁴ In the event of divorce, return of the bridewealth signifies the end of a marriage. Among the matrilineal Akans, when the bridewealth is returned, divorce is automatic, irrespective of the guilty party.

Death is the last rite of passage. Death is believed to be an act of God, and various traditional myths speak of the divine origins of death. One such myth is that the message of immortality was carried by an animal, who delayed. Another animal arrived first, and told man that he must die and be buried. God refused to change his mind after the first message was received by man, and that is how death came into the world. Death is inevitable, a debt that must be paid by all. However, death is not the end of human existence. There is life beyond the grave, a belief shared by all religions. The traditional belief is that when the breath of life leaves the person, he is declared dead and the

⁹³ Quarcoopome, *West African Traditional Religion*, 122.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 123.

physical frame rots in the ground. The soul however survives death and returns to God, where it is required to render an account of its stewardship on earth. Death is therefore regarded as a transition from one state of existence to another. It is a passage from this earthly existence to another world. In view of this, great care is taken in burying the dead.⁹⁵

It is social conditioning that determines culture. Culture comprises the complex or sum-total of ideas, behavior patterns, linguistic tradition, legacy of institutions and concepts of life that have been learned and passed on from generation to generation in a given society.⁹⁶ According to Catholic Archbishop Peter K. Sarpong, who spoke at the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), "We recognize as well the challenge of inculturation of Christianity in Africa, an evangelization in depth of the African Christian; which respects and affirms his specific cultural identity and seeks to bridge the gap between faith and Culture. In this important and delicate task, we are determined to proceed with courage and faith as well as with due sense of pastoral responsibility." In sum, inculturation deals with contextualization. It makes the Word of the Lord relevant in a given milieu.⁹⁷

African Traditional Religion (ATR) has been given several names. According to Peter Sarpong, traditional religion has been vital in shaping the African way of life. African cultures are known for their religious orientation, and in fact, are deeply religious. It is not possible to study African culture in isolation from religion. Religion

⁹⁵ Quarcoopome, *West African Traditional Religion*, 125.

⁹⁶ Peter, K. Sarpong "Growth or Decay: Can Christianity dialogue with African Traditional religion?" *Bulletin of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue* 69 (1988): 189-206.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

permeates African life from the cradle to the grave. African traditional religion, therefore, has a role in shaping African's future. We must know the past in order to understand the present, and be better equipped to plan the future. We cannot know the past of the African if we neglect his religion.⁹⁸

This conviction compels religious adherents to comport themselves in a manner they believe will please the object of their worship. Hence we have moral and ethical behavior. This, in turn, leads believers to meet from time to time, in order to express their faith in, and dependence on, their spiritual overlord. This is worship, or liturgy. These three elements are common to all religions, and are not linked to a written word. A religion is not a religion or a high religion because its tenets are written down; on the contrary, the tenets are written down because it is already a religion.

In the heyday of traditional religion in Africa, word of mouth was considered much more sacred than the written word is now. Today in Asante, written wills are constantly contested. A hundred years ago, the last verbal testament of a dying person would never be altered, or disputed. Even if only one person may have heard it, it would be honored. It was assumed that one honorable person would not put into the mouth of the dying person a single that word that he had not said. The word was powerful. Jesus taught this power of the word clearly. He never wrote down a word of what he said; but he founded a religion.⁹⁹

African Traditional Religion does not tamper with the spoken word. Ceremonies of vital importance such as enstoolment of a chief, the marriage rite, the initiation of a

⁹⁸ Sarpong, *Growth or Decay*, 189-206.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

priest or a youth into a secret society, or the commissioning of a warrior, are all performed with ritual and words; nothing is written down. In my own life-time, growing up, one could take food items from another person's farm without the latter's knowledge or consent. It was sufficient for the one who took the plantain or pepper to inform the rightful owner afterwards that he took it for personal consumption. He was believed, and would never abuse the trust by selling what he had taken. That is what religion is about; fidelity and conviction, not interpretation and analysis of ideas. African traditional religion has a message for us here. Its lack of scripture has not, in any way, meant lack of effectiveness.

Religion is to be practiced, not just talked about. Doctrine and ideology are not useless, but doctrine devoid of practice is meaningless. It is an injustice to call West African traditional religion, with its strong belief in a God who is unique, incomparable and a Creator, paganism. Africa has its own religion, and to continue to describe that religion as paganism is to degrade the African religious experience, and to deny the religious heritage any abiding values.¹⁰⁰

Why the word “fetishism” has caught on as a description of African traditional religion is, again, a mystery.¹⁰¹ Fetishism is derived from the Portuguese word *fetico*, which originally referred to works of art or man-made religious objects, such as talismans, amulets and mascots, used by the Africans encountered by the Portuguese on their voyages. Later, the word came to be used as a synonym for religion in Africa, with

¹⁰⁰Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion*, 4.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 4.

the implication that such religion amounted to nothing more than the use or worship of charms.¹⁰² There are several objections to this use of 'fetish' in the African context.

- a. The religion of Africa means more than what the word fetish implies.
- b. There is distinct bias against Africans in the exclusive application of the term to their man-made religious objects.
- c. The word could also be used for similar objects of other peoples outside of Africa, but in those non-African instances, the objects in question were never referred to as fetish but by their actual names.¹⁰³

T.N.O. Quarcoopome goes even further to state that the word fetish referred to charms and amulets used by the Portuguese themselves, and when the Portuguese saw the Africans wearing similar objects, they identified them with their religion. That became the preferred term for describing the West African worship of terrestrial and material objects and extended to a general theory of primitive religion, in which material objects are regarded as animated by life, similar to that of man. The identification of fetish with the whole African Traditional religion is the product of inadequate data, ignorance or prejudice, and the inability to grasp the fundamentals of African worship naturally leads one into the error of taking appearance for reality.¹⁰⁴

There is an unfortunate understanding of the word "native." The Italian is as native to Italy as the Maori is native to New Zealand. Every religion, therefore, is native to where it is founded. African traditional religion cannot be singled out and "honored " with the word "native". Perhaps the worst epithet used to describe African traditional religion is *ancestor-worship*. As has been mentioned, ancestors do form part of the

¹⁰²Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion*, 4.

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

religious thought of the African, but the existence and the veneration of saints also forms part of the thinking of Christians. No Christian would accept a definition of Christianity as "Saint Worship". Christians would rightly protest, and the reason would not simply be that there are more important aspects to Christianity than Saints.

By reason of passing through death, it is believed ancestors possess a power that is beyond that of humans. However, neither they nor the lesser gods can act independently of the will of God, the all-powerful, eternal, all-knowing, superlatively great God. African Traditional Religion is no more ancestor worship than Islam is Muhammad-worship or Christianity is saint-worship. Professor Opoku has stressed the need to look into the African Traditional Religion in all its true power, to search for God through the African way and not the Jewish way.

“Nsem nyinaa ne Nyame” – All wisdom is from God. He has given us natural and revealed religion. Finding God through our own experience instead of theological religion need not cause conflict. God speaks to prophets in Ghana and elsewhere, not just to the Jewish prophets. What was God doing before the Jewish God? According to Professor Opoku, there are different ways to unwrap a ball of kenkey¹⁰⁵ – bottom left, top right, and so on, but the objective is to get to the kenkey. God’s truth is not contained only in the Bible; a whole area of convergence exists, and every religion has something to offer¹⁰⁶.

Man is born with a desire to seek his creator. Believing in God is part of our upbringing, and African Traditional Religion (ATR) is a natural religion, where no single

¹⁰⁵Kenkey is a staple food of Ghana – it is made out of fermented corn meal and eaten as carbohydrate with fish, etc.

¹⁰⁶Personal conversations with Professor Opoku.

prophet has exclusive claim to revelations from God. People's knowledge of God is based on their own reflection of the universe. Unless a society speaks for itself, others will speak for them, even damaging things. In addition, every religion has its charlatans. The behavior of one person can bring disrepute to a whole community.

According to Professor Opoku, Africans have no shrines or temples to God. When the Europeans arrived and did not see shrines, they thought we did not believe in God, but to an African, the absence of a shrine reflects the limitlessness of God. When one goes to Rome and visits a cathedral, one cannot think about Christ. When you look up at a beautiful painted ceiling, all you can think about is the creativity of the artist. In the African Traditional Religion, an individual derives a sense of community by being identified by a specific name. No one has a private extension to God, everyone is given a direct channel for communicating with God; it is not exclusive to one person. We respect and revere our ancestors. Every religion has its intermediary to reach to God: Christianity through Christ, Muslims through Muhammad, and Buddhists through Buddha. In African Traditional Religion, our ancestors act as our intermediaries. That does not mean we worship them.¹⁰⁷

Professor Opoku states that African ancestors are bilingual, speaking the language of the spirit world as well as the present world. Since they have already lived in this world, they are able to return as helpers, in order to reinforce the community's welfare and spirituality. If one has lived an exemplary life, when you die, your name never vanishes from the clan, and as the proverb goes: "When a person dies his tongue does not rot". Our ancestors laid the foundations for our society. Traditions and festivals hold

¹⁰⁷Personal conversations with Professor Opoku

communities in Africa together. This is especially critical for the election of chiefs. For example, in Ghana, when President Nkrumah was deposed in 1966, there was no social disruption in some of the communities. But when there is a destoolment of a chief, the community is disrupted, and falls into jeopardy.¹⁰⁸

An African's father is not just the person biologically responsible for his/her conception, and the mother is not necessarily the woman who physically gave him/her birth. An African may have as many as fifteen "fathers" and ten "mothers." In the ideal situation, each one of these would treat him/her as a biological father or mother would. Since he/she has several "mothers" and "fathers", obviously he/she has many more brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces. In fact, in some African languages, the words "cousin," "aunt," and "uncle," does not exist. One's father's brother is one's father and one's mother's sister is one's mother.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸TIDAC Winterim workshop on Onyamesom with Prof. Opoku, Dec. 2008- Jan.2009 at Akropong

¹⁰⁹Personal conversations with Professor Opoku.

Kristosom

The Worship of Jesus Christ in the Akan Tradition in Ghana

The word ‘som’ in Akan means worship: therefore *Kristosom* in Akan means worship of Jesus Christ. This is what the Basel Mission started when they came to the Gold Coast, which is now Ghana in 1828, and settled in the Akuapem Mountains in the Eastern region of Ghana at Akropong, in 1835. Akropong is famous for its Presbyterianism; a person is known to be honest and blessed for being from that town.¹¹⁰

Kristosom (the worship of Jesus Christ) is what the Presbyterian Church established when the missionaries first arrived in my home town of Akropong in 1835 and set up their mission through the missionaries in Ghana. Since then, religion has been confined to the beliefs taught by European missionaries. The Presbyterian Church is the established church in my home town, the source of our society’s values. This has strongly influenced my life. This town, located in the eastern region of Ghana, attracted the first missionaries from Europe. It is also where the first Training College for the Presbyterian Church of Ghana was built.

The history of Christianity concerns the Christian religion, and activities of the Church from the ministry of Jesus up to contemporary times. Christianity differs most significantly from the other Abrahamic religions in the claim that Jesus Christ is God’s son. The vast majority of Christians believe in the Trinity – a triune God consisting of three unified and distinct persons: Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Christianity initially

¹¹⁰Smith, *The Churches*” in David Brokensha, 65.

spread from Jerusalem to the Near East, becoming the official state religion of the Roman Empire in 380.¹¹¹

During the Age of Exploration, Christianity expanded throughout the world. During its early history, it grew from its beginnings as a 1st century Jewish sect, to a religion of the entire Greek and Roman world, and beyond. Early Christianity may be divided into two distinctive phases:

- i. The apostolic period, when the first apostles were alive and led the church, and
- ii. The post-apostolic period, when an early Episcopal structure developed.

The Roman persecution of Christians ended in AD 313 under the reign of Constantine the Great, and in 325 he prompted the First Council of Nicaea. The first Christians were essentially ethnically Jewish or Jewish proselytes.¹¹²

Although the Great Commission is specifically directed at “all nations”, an early difficulty arose concerning the matter of gentile (non-Jewish) converts, as to whether they would be required to follow Jewish law regarding dietary restrictions and circumcision for males, in order to become Christian. Circumcision was considered repulsive by many non-Jews of the Mediterranean Basin. Other doctrines of the apostles brought the early church into conflict with Jewish religious authorities. This eventually led to their expulsion from the synagogues. Thus, Christianity acquired an identity distinct from rabbinic Judaism, but this distinction was not recognized all at once by the Roman Empire. The name “Christian” was first applied to the disciples in Antioch, as

¹¹¹United Nations Roma Victrix, “Christianity; the Official Religion of the Roman Empire,” <http://www.unrvHistory.com/Christianity, the Official Religion of the Roman Empire> (accessed November 23, 2009).

¹¹² Ibid.

recorded in Acts 11:26. For example, some of the words of the creed in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 were preserved:

For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.”

Early Christianity retained some of the doctrines and practices of the first-century Judaism, while rejecting others. Historically, most churches have taught that the nature of God is a mystery, meaning something that must be seen by special revelation. Among the early Christians, there was considerable debate over the nature of the Godhead, with some factions arguing for the deity of Jesus and others calling for a Unitarian concept of God. These issues of Christology were to form the main points of contention at the First Council of Nicaea. The First Council of Nicaea, held in Nicaea in Bithynia (present-day Turkey), was convened by the Roman Emperor Constantine 1 in 325, A.D. This was the first ecumenical conference of bishops of the Christian church, and most significantly resulted in the first uniform Christian doctrine, called the Nicene Creed.¹¹³

With the creation of the Creed, a precedent was established for subsequent general ecumenical councils of Bishops (Synods) to create statements of belief and canons of doctrinal orthodoxy – the intent being to define a unity of belief for all Christendom. The purpose of the Council was to resolve disagreement in the church of Alexandria over the nature of Jesus in relationship to the Father; in particular, whether Jesus was of the same substance as God the Father, or merely of similar substance. St.

¹¹³Wikimedia Foundation, “Nicene Creed,” [http://www.wikipedia.org/Nicene Creed](http://www.wikipedia.org/Nicene%20Creed) (accessed November 23, 2009).

Alexander of Alexandria and Athanasius took the first position; the popular presbyter Arius, from whom the term Arian controversy comes, took the second.¹¹⁴

The council overwhelmingly decided against the Arians. In the early 16th century, movements were begun by two theologians, Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli, to reform the Church; these reformers are distinguished from previous ones in that they considered the root of corruption to be doctrinal (rather than simply a matter of moral weakness or lack of ecclesiastical discipline.) They aimed to reform contemporary doctrine to accord with what they perceived to be the "true gospel"¹¹⁵

The Protestant Reformation may be divided into two distinct but basically simultaneous movements, the Magisterial Reformation and the Radical Reformation. The Magisterial Reformation involved the alliance of certain theological teachers such as Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Cranmer, etc. with secular magistrates who cooperated in the reformation of Christendom. Radical Reformers, besides forming communities outside of state sanction, often employed more extreme doctrinal change, such as the rejection of the tenets of the Councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon.

John Calvin was a 16th-century French cleric and doctor of law, turned Protestant reformer. Calvin trained for the Catholic priesthood at the University of Paris and became a theologian and minister. He belonged to the second generation of the Reformation, publishing his theological tome, the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, (a work of systematic theology) in 1536 (later revised), and establishing himself as a leader of the Reformed Church in Geneva, which became an "unofficial capital" of Reformed

¹¹⁴Wikimedia Foundation, "Nicene Creed," [http://www.wikipedia.org/Nicene Creed](http://www.wikipedia.org/Nicene%20Creed) (accessed November 23, 2009).

¹¹⁵Wikimedia Foundation, "Presbyterianism," <http://www.wikipedia.org/Presbyterianism> (accessed November 23, 2009).

Christianity in the second half of the sixteenth century. Presbyterian and Reformed churches both have historical roots in the thought of John Calvin.¹¹⁶

Calvin also gave a great deal of thought to practical matters such as the ministry, the church, religious education, and the Christian life. Although he had planned to live the quiet life of a scholar, Calvin was instead coerced into leading the Reformation in Geneva, Switzerland. He worked in Geneva from 1536 to 1538, was driven out of town for a short time, then returned again from 1541 and remained until his death in 1564. Calvin provided religious and classical education to students of the Geneva Academy, a school which he had founded. In 1541, the town council of Geneva enacted Calvin's *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, which set forth regulations on everything from church order and religious education to gambling, dancing, and swearing. Strict disciplinary measures were put in place to deal with transgressors of these ordinances. In many ways, Calvin's theology was similar to Martin Luther's.¹¹⁷

The Frenchman John Calvin agreed with the German on the doctrines of original sin, justification by faith alone, the priesthood of all believers, and the sole authority of the scriptures. The theological distinctives of John Calvin lie primarily in degrees of emphasis. For example, both reformers affirmed the sovereignty of God, but Calvin tended to emphasize God's power and glory, whereas Luther often thought of God as the babe in the manger, among human beings. Although "Calvinist" theology is perhaps most well-known today for its emphasis on predestination, Calvin himself did not emphasize it much more than Luther. He regarded it as a theological mystery, but a

¹¹⁶ Wikimedia Foundation, "John Calvin," <http://www.wikipedia.org/John Calvin> (accessed November 23, 2009).

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

comforting doctrine. Some have speculated that Calvin suffered from a great deal of doubt about his own salvation, and found reassurance in his faith that the matter was entirely in the hands of a loving and reliable God.

In his ecclesiology (view of the church), Calvin remained closer to Catholicism than did Luther. For instance, Calvin emphasized the institutional church as the true church, the authority of clergy over laity, and the importance of a holy life, whereas Luther saw the body of true believers as the true church, focused on the priesthood of all believers, and continually preached the importance of faith over works. The two reformers also differed in their view of the Eucharist (or Communion); Calvin agreed with Luther on the Real Presence of Christ in the bread and wine, but regarded that presence as purely spiritual.¹¹⁸

The most important standards of orthodox Presbyterianism are the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms* of 1647. The chief distinctive features set forth in the Westminster declarations of belief are Presbyterian Church government, Calvinistic theology, and absence of prescribed forms of worship. Presbyterians trace their history to the 16th century and the Protestant Reformation. Presbyterianism in a wide sense is the system of church government by representative assemblies called presbyteries, in opposition to government by bishops (Episcopal system), or by congregations (congregationalism).¹¹⁹

African Christianity

¹¹⁸ Wikimedia Foundation, "John Calvin," <http://www.wikipedia.org/John Calvin> (accessed November 23, 2009).

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

While every day in the West, roughly 7500 people in effect stop becoming Christians, every day in Africa roughly double that number become Christians.....¹²⁰

The expansion of Christianity in twentieth-century Africa is so dramatic that it has been called the 'fourth great age of Christian expansion.'¹²¹ Elizabeth Isichei quotes statistics which even she states are unreliable, but they serve as a starting point in the prelude to her book. According to the statistics, there were 10 million African Christians in 1900, 143 million in 1970, and there will be 393 million in the 2000, which would mean that 1 in 5 of all Christians would be an African.¹²² These statistics are close to what can be found on the internet where, according to Wikipedia, there were 9 million African Christians in 1900 but by the year 2000, there were 380 million. According to this website, in 2006, a Pew forum on Religion and Public life study revealed that 147 million of African Christians were renewalists (a term including Pentecostals and Charismatics.) According to David Barret of the World Christian Encyclopedia, in 2025, there will be 633 million Christians in Africa.¹²³

The Reformation churches showed curiously little interest in the missionary enterprise. All this changed in the late eighteenth century, as a result of the evangelical revival. The so-called African or Ethiopian churches, founded between 1880 and 1920, established new religious organizations run by Africans, but these differed only in the

¹²⁰ Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of Christianity In Africa-From Antiquity to Present* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; Lawrenceville, New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc., 1995), 1.

¹²¹ Isichei, *A History of Christianity In Africa*, 2-3.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Wikimedia Foundation, "Christianity in Africa," <http://www.wikipedia.org/Christianity in Africa> (accessed November 23, 2009).

detail from the mission churches from which they had separated themselves.¹²⁴ It is always easier to fight yesterday's battles, and the most urgent and acute challenge to the Christian conscience lies in poverty. Where world religions become social frameworks, two things must happen to old ethnic religions. First, they must be eliminated; second, elements of the old religions are incorporated.....a third possibility is that ethnic religions may survive, though in attenuated form.....¹²⁵

However, there is an underlying problem, which greatly complicates relationships between foreign missionaries and African Christians, and it lies in the question - are traditional divinities an illusion, or are they real, but evil? A history of the growth of Christianity easily slides into a form of triumphalism, where local cultures are passive and static. According to R. Horton, this is one aspect of the transition from the village world, where local nature or ancestral spirits flourish, to a larger community, where 'universal' religions seem more appropriate. However, it is clear that just as Christianity has been influenced by insights from African cultures, African religions have absorbed intimations from Christianity.¹²⁶ Christianity is a religion of the Book, and the transition to literacy was an important part of the transformations it engendered. Much has been written on its implications for religious understanding.¹²⁷

A History of the Akuapem Region in the 1700's

¹²⁴ Isichei, *A History of Christianity In Africa*, 2-3.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 5.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 6-7.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 9.

Before the Basel Mission came to the Gold Coast in 1828, one missionary by the name of Paul Iserts visited the Akuapem Ridge in 1786. Below are extracts from letters on his visit to the mountains of Akuapem.

Paul Iserts Letters (1786) Journey to Guinea (Originally Published in Copenhagen, in 1788; Translated from the German by Agnes Klinshirn). The following extracts are from letters that Iserts wrote to his father on his first visit to Akuapem in 1786.¹²⁸

The climate is definitely healthier than on the sea coast; the high location of the land also counts. It is colder here than on the coast; the temperature dropped ten degrees as soon as I ascended the mountain. One feels only a little wind; nevertheless, the air is clear. The Akuapem still live like the first innocents in paradise, with little difference. Anything that he plants brings him more than hundred fold, which is why he works at most three to four weeks of the whole year. The rest of the time he uses only for pleasure and customs. The household help never works himself, but keeps one or more slaves, or his children plant the maize and yams, grow plantains and bananas which they either plant or cut off the old trunks as new shoots grow out of the roots themselves, tap palm-wine, go hunting, etc.¹²⁹

They make little of the maize and do not grow more than what they expect to eat freshly roasted. Their most choice vegetable from July to December is the yam which is supposed to be much better here than in Colombia. They eat it roasted, as bread, or they cook it with meat soup and palm nut (palm nut soup) or they make a kind of dumpling, which tastes fine. They plant like we do the potatoes, but because the roots are so big that

¹²⁸ They contain much of interest, especially regarding domestic details of food and palm wine and houses, and also demonstrate that at least some of the early European visitors had the same image of Akuapem people as happy, smiling and hospitable, as those who arrived much later.

¹²⁹ Presbyterian Church of Ghana, *170 Years Anniversary of Akropong Christ Church*, 25.

one may well weigh 25 pounds and more, they cut in into small pieces. It is best when it is roasted or cooked, and almost tastes like potatoes. The remaining six months of the year they lack the yam as it does not grow well and so they have in its place the fruits of the plantain tree, whole forest of which are found, and whose fruits available throughout the year.¹³⁰

I stayed for ten days partly to become acquainted with the location and borders of the counters, partly also because my friend Attiambo did not want to let me travel and because I always found food enough for my mind even if I could have stayed for months. From here I made daily excursions to the surrounding vicinity and always found it well worth the trouble. The duke always sent an armed escort of his own with me. My host provides me in excess with everything necessary for my self and my company, but sometimes when I went to town for a walk to get my exercise, here an there a man would come running out of his house and beg me to give house honors of drinking a cup of palm wine. When I accepted the invitation I could not marvel enough at the happy face of the host and his family who all came up in order to see me better. To the children, I usually was a terror, for when unexpectedly approached them, they screamed aloud and run away. Other ten to twelve year old boys would run after me, but would always be in their guards and when I turn around merely to talk with my servants or may be, lost in thought, grabbed my dagger, they all took to their heels.¹³¹

¹³⁰ Presbyterian Church of Ghana, *170 Years*, 24.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 31.

European Missionaries:

In the second half of the eighteenth century, an Evangelical movement emerged in England that stimulated a revival of religious fervor. This movement gave birth to several missionary societies, including the Baptist Missionary Society (1772), the London Missionary Society (1795), the Church Missionary Society (1799) and the Wesleyan Missionary Society. The Movement spread to the European mainland, giving rise to Missionary Societies in the Netherlands, North Germany, Paris and Basel.¹³² The Basel Mission found itself competing for converts with these other missions, and sought to use whatever means necessary to achieve this goal.

According to Ernest Munachi Ezeogu, in his book *Essays in African Theology: Bible and Culture in African Theology*, Part 1, Christian missionaries sent to Africa in the early days of the missionary movement were apparently theologically ill-equipped for the task. Many of them were recruited as for war, and saw themselves as “Christian soldiers” marching to war against demonic powers and forces of darkness, in order to liberate Africa for Christ and save the hell-bound souls of its inhabitants. They thought of African culture and religion as fetishism from the kingdom of Satan, fit only to be crushed under the Cross of Jesus, so as to raise banners for the kingdom of Christ.¹³³

Against this backdrop, the missionaries “invaded” Africa. Initially, a happy relationship between church and state prevailed, due to the peoples’ fascination with the opportunities of the western-style education introduced by the Basel Mission. Schools were built to educate converts, and the church abstained from involvement in the

¹³² Robert Addo-Fening, *Akyem Abuakwa 1700-1943 from Ofori Panin to Sir Ofori Atta* (Norway: Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 1997), 55.

¹³³ Ernest M. Ezeogu, “Essays in African Theology: Bible and Culture in African Theology,” *International Review of Mission*, (January 1998): 5.

domestic politics of the region. By 1868, when the Basel Mission realized that they were not converting people as they had hoped, they became more aggressive, showing open contempt for the judicial authority and sovereignty of the *Okyenhene* at the time.¹³⁴

The new posture of the Basel missionaries betrayed a lack of understanding of the true political relationship between the British government and the states. In these states, such as Akan, religion was inseparably linked to politics. Since religion linked the living to the gods and ancestors, it provided important sanctions for political authority, and solace and security for the community as a whole.¹³⁵ Examining the work of the Basel missionaries, it is easy to see that one of the reasons for their failure is that they did not set realistic goals in their mission, but more importantly, they failed to integrate Christianity with African traditions.

¹³⁴ Addo-Fening, *Akyem Abuakwa 1700-1941*, 59.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

The Basel Mission - The Man: Andreas Riis

Andreas Riis was born on January 12, 1804 in Denmark, to Andreas Peterson Riis, a glazier by profession. Riis was one of the four sons of Peterson Riis, and he took after his father's vocation, thus he also became a glazier. He was rather interested in evangelism in Africa. He fortunately met a priest, Rev. Matheson and discussed his ambition with him. Through the recommendation of Rev. Matheson, Riis and another fellow Peter Jager were enrolled in the Basel Missionary School, in June 1828. While at the school, they met a friend, Christian Frederick Heinze, who also showed keen interest in missionary work in Africa. These three friends were recruited for missionary work at Christiansburg. They landed at Christiansburg in March 1832, only to learn that the last of the four missionaries, Johannes Henke, had died in November 1832. The three others who died earlier were Karl F. Salback, Gottlieb Holzwarth and Johannes Gottlieb Schmidt.¹³⁶

Within few weeks of their arrival, two of the missionaries died, leaving Riis alone. He stayed as a chaplain for two years at the Christiansburg Castle before he was allowed to move inland, after the appointment of a new chaplain at the Castle. It was in 1835 that he set out for Akuapem Ridge. "This decision fulfilled three desirable conditions: first, the need of a healthier, higher location in view of the six deaths; second, to work among a truly indigenous people as yet largely unaffected by demoralizing influence of Europeans on the coast; and third to be free of the suspicion in the native mind that the mission was a Danish political agency."¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Presbyterian Church of Ghana, *170 Years*, 11.

¹³⁷ Noel Smith, *The Churches in David Brokensha* (ed.), *Akwapim Handbook* (Tema, Ghana: Publishing Corporation, 1972), 30.

It is believed that reading Dr. Paul Erdmann Iserts' book *Letters on West Africa and the Slave Trade* during his preparation for his assignment largely influenced Riis's decision. With permission granted by the Danish Governor, Riis set out, accompanied by George Lutterodt, a mulatto¹³⁸. They visited Nana Addo Dankwa 1, arriving at Akropong on 25th January 1835. They stayed until 30th January before returning to Christiansburg to prepare for a final settlement. On the first visit, Nana was cordial, and granted his permission for opening a mission station. On March 26, 1835 Riis, accompanied by a mulatto interpreter, two house-boys and a soldier from Christiansburg, returned to Akropong. On his arrival the reception was equally cordial, and Nana arranged for him to stay temporarily in the house of Kwao Kuturuku.¹³⁹

It was interesting to note how both in Accra and Akropong, Riis was cured of malaria through the use of herbs. Riis remained with his host until February 1836, when he moved into his own house, built with the help of the people of Akropong. Upon the successful completion of the building, Riis was given a nickname in Twi "*OSIADAN*". In 1836, three missionaries arrived at the Akropong station. One, Miss Anna Walters, a 20-year-old Danish girl, came as the bride of Riis; the others were Johannes Murdter and Andreas Stanger. For five years, Riis did not convert a single soul to Christ. He also encountered other problems. Therefore, the Basel Committee or Home Board asked him to return to Europe. This order was repeated in 1839.¹⁴⁰

Some of Riis's Problems were:

¹³⁸ Someone with mixed race.

¹³⁹ Presbyterian Church of Ghana, *170 Years*, 11.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

- The Danish Governor's orders forbidding missionaries from exercising any ministerial duty, and the death of two missionaries: Stanger in 1837, Murdter in 1838, and his infant daughter at the end of the same year.
- From Akropong, Riis traveled to the following areas of the country: Shai Hills, through Krobo, and across the Volta to Akwamu.
- Kibi and Cape Coast en-route to Ashanti. He reached Kumasi on 29th December 1839, stayed for 14 days without having audience with Asantehene.
- Before Riis decided to leave probably for good in 1840, he went to take leave of Nana Addo Dankwa 1. Nana's advice to Riis that some black men should be included in the missionary work in order to act as role models proved prophetic, and eventually helped greatly in spreading the gospel.¹⁴¹

On his return in 1843, 24 missionaries accompanied him, 23 from Jamaica and one from Antigua. One missionary, Widmann, proved very helpful with education issues. "Riis and his colleagues started learning as soon as they arrived at Christiansburg in 1832. When he moved to Akropong, Riis continued to learn the language, and he wrote a school textbook before he even had the opportunity of opening a school. In his evidence before the parliamentary Committee of 1842, he says: 'now when I return, I intend to open a school immediately. I have written a book in Ashanti.'" The Missionary Factor in Ghana's Development (1820 – 1880) by S.K. Odamten. (page 118).¹⁴² Widmann opened the Junior School in 1843 with the children of the black missionaries and some local black children, including David Asante, William Yirenkyi, Paul Staudt Keteku and Isaac Addo Mensah. Riis and his wife left Africa for Europe in August 1845, embarking at Christiansburg; unfortunately, his wife died on the journey.

¹⁴¹ Presbyterian Church of Ghana, *170 Years*, 15.

¹⁴² Ibid. 44.

Upon his return to Europe, Riis became a traveling preacher for the Norwegian Church in the Stavanger area, until his death in 1854. From his earliest career in Akropong (1835-42), Riis' deep friendship with Nana Addo Dankwa 1, his warm reception from the people of Akropong, including the "Osofo", his dedication to helping others, and his active participation in the recruitment of West Indian mission workers helped Christianity to grow. We may reasonably deduce that when Riis left the service of the Basel Mission on the Gold Coast, he felt confident that the work of mission would continue under African leadership. The West Indians in Akropong became an early example of a functioning African Christian community, delivering proof that the Christian faith is, and always has been, valuable for those of African descent. Foodstuffs and plants that they brought to grow in our environment, such as cocoa, coffee, sour sop, cocoyam, among others, have become staples for us.¹⁴³

We now live in a Christian world vastly changed from the time of Andreas Riis.¹⁴⁴ Christianity itself has become a largely non-European religion, more evident and vital in Africa than in Europe. Perhaps there was something symbolic in Riis leaving Akropong to become a mission preacher in Norway, bringing his African experience to Europe, as a blessing. For in the year 2005, when the General Secretary of Mission 21 (formerly Basel Mission) was baptized at the General Assembly Service of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, in Kumasi, perhaps we African Christians could appreciate that Christianity's

¹⁴³ Presbyterian Church of Ghana, *170 Years*, 44.

¹⁴⁴ Kwame Bediako, *170 years Anniversary of Akropong Christ Church*, Akropong-Akuapem (Accra: Qualitype Limited), 29.

mission is not just “one way traffic” from Europe to Africa. Christian mission can also travel from Africa to Europe. In this too, Andreas Riis was a pioneer.¹⁴⁵

The West Indian Factor in the Establishment of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana: The Conviction of Things Not Seen

Picture the situation in Akropong in 1843, when the first party of West Indian missionaries arrived. The tarred roads that we see now were not there. All the mighty buildings that we see today were not there. A few scattered mud houses sufficed as homes for the people. Now turn, look up the path that leads from Mamfe, and imagine a group of strangers entering the town. There are three white men among them, accompanied by boys and girls carrying some of their luggage. A real sight to behold and anybody who witnessed it must have known that Akropong would never be the same again.¹⁴⁶

Many years have passed since the first missionaries from Basel set foot on our soil, and time has a way of eroding the vividness of old stories, and their impact. However, the story of the West Indians should continue to be told, never glossing over the difficulties and challenges. It is a beautiful story, of courage and cooperation in mission which brought together various classes and races of people in support of a good cause. Everything worked for good, and all obstacles were eventually overcome, an indication that there was a greater hand at the helm of affairs, and that all the players were merely instruments in the grand mission begun by God himself.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Bediako, *170 years Anniversary of Akropong Christ Church*, 29.

¹⁴³ David N.A. Kpobi, *170 years Anniversary of Akropong Christ Church, Akropong-Akuapem*, (Accra: Qualitype Limited), 18.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

Only men and women of faith and courage could have undertaken such a venture, and it is fitting to pay tribute to these people who offered themselves to be used. The story of the West Indians was, however, a continuation of a venture already begun. While stressing the West Indian missionaries' contribution, we should not forget that success was the result of a cooperative effort, and that many non-West Indians played key roles as well.¹⁴⁸

The Basel Mission had been established in 1815 by Protestant Christians as a base for the training of missionaries to all parts of the world. Although based in Basel, Switzerland, its membership included people of many nationalities, from both Lutheran and Reformed persuasions with a strongly evangelical character. Thus, when the opportunity arose for missionaries to go to the Gold Coast, the Basel Mission did not hesitate to send missionaries. In the story of this work in the Gold Coast, certain names stand out prominently, since it pleased the Lord to use them in a special way. One such name was that of Andreas Riis, who braved many odds on the mission field, and in spite of his own shortcomings, became a worthy instrument for the planting of a church in the Gold Coast.¹⁴⁹

Riis was among the second batch of three missionaries sent to the Gold Coast in 1832, after the first group of four had all died from disease. He was a Danish Lutheran, who had been ordained by his church just prior to his departure. As the lone survivor of his group, he preached in Osu before finally deciding to relocate in January 1835 to the Akuapem area, where the climate appeared much friendlier. Here also, evangelism

¹⁴⁸ Kpobi, *170 years*, 18.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

proved difficult due to the political situation at the time. However, Riis made friends in Akropong, especially with Addo Dankwa I. In 1840, he was summoned back to Basel in order that the whole mission enterprise could be reassessed.¹⁵⁰

Understandably, the Home Committee in Basel was beginning to regret squandering precious lives on an unfruitful venture. Wilhelm Hoffman, who assumed the leadership of the Basel Mission, persuaded his colleagues not to abandon the mission, but instead to find a more workable means of continuing. Hoffman proposed that the Basel Mission recruit African Christians from the West Indies, to be used for the missionary enterprise in the Gold Coast. The report of Andreas Riis also indicates that during a visit with King Addo Dankwa prior to his departure from Africa, the king had delivered a challenge; if he could meet other Africans who had embraced the Christian religion, then he (the king) and his people might also be positively inclined to accept the Gospel.¹⁵¹

The Rescue

Once Hoffman's suggestion was accepted, plans were laid to pursue it without delay. Riis was appointed to head a recruitment team consisting of three persons, Johan George Widmann, Herman Hauller and an African freed slave, George Thompson. After careful and prayerful consultation, they made a selection of six families, and three bachelors. These were:

John Hall, wife and son, Andrew
John Rochester, wife and two children, Hannah and John
Joseph Miller, wife, and three children, Rosina, Robert, and Catherine
James G. Mullings, wife and daughter, Elizabeth
John Edward Walker and Wife
James Green and wife

¹⁵⁰ Kpobi, *170 years*, 18

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

David Robertson
Alexander W. Clerk
Jonas Hosford¹⁵²

After the necessary orientation and negotiations, a contract was signed with the emigrants. They set sail on 7th February 1843, arriving at Christiansburg on 17th April 1843. Also on board the ship were Riis, Widmann, and George Thompson, as well as Catherine Mulgrave, whom Thompson had married while enroute to Jamaica. The arrival of this large group signaled the beginning of a new phase of the mission in the Gold Coast. An advance party made up of Riis, Widmann, Halleur and five West Indians set off for Akropong on 10th May, arriving on 18th June, 1843. A number of the emigrants found themselves unable to cope with the circumstances of mission work, and were allowed to disengage according to the terms of their contract. By 1850, those who remained had become integrated into the Akropong community.

This group was made up of:

John Hall and his family
John Rochester and family
James Mullings and family
Joseph Miller and family
Alexander Clerk¹⁵³

These formed the nucleus of the Christian community at Akropong, and they and their children remained loyal to the mission, serving in various capacities. By 1850, after seven years of work, the little Christian settlement was well-established, the coffee plantation

¹⁵² Kpobi, *170 years*, 19.

¹⁵³ Ibid. 19.

had become productive, progress had been made with the Twi language, and the school was flourishing.¹⁵⁴

The Jamaican presence made a lasting impact on many areas in the life of the people of Akuapem – social, political, cultural and religious, owing to the Jamaicans' holistic method of evangelism. The first task that confronted them was the need for housing, and this was also the first area in which they made an impact. The stone buildings that they built revolutionized traditional architecture. By 1847, that is, about four years, a total of 32 stone houses had been built in Akropong as well as a small chapel. The following year, 5 more stone houses were erected. These were set aside for a Seminary and training college.¹⁵⁵

The West Indians therefore created a new quarter in the Akropong Township, which came to be known as Salem; it became a useful place for the nurture of new Christian converts. Since then, no narrative of our history is complete without reference to Salem, which was an innovative and practical response to a prevailing need. Upon the establishment of these separate living quarters, the West Indians began evangelizing the people of Akropong, and achieved so much success that the Salem system was replicated in many Akuapem towns and even beyond.¹⁵⁶

Church – State Relations

One other important contribution of the West Indians was the cordial relationship that they established between the Christian community and the local government. The initial friendship that had developed between Riis and the Akuapem king led to a mutual

¹⁵⁴ Kpobi, *170 years*, 19.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

acceptance by church and state. The state began to trust the Christians as agents of peace and positive change, and the church was sometimes allowed to mediate political or social disputes. The West Indian community also managed to mitigate the severity of the practice of slavery in the Akuapem state. Being themselves the descendants of slaves, they knew the bitterness of slavery, and were eager to introduce changes to the slavery that they witnessed in Akropong.¹⁵⁷

The missionaries sometimes purchased slaves, and brought them to the safety of the mission, to be taught Christian principles and later baptized. The contribution of the West Indians to the establishment of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana was phenomenal. They displayed great faith and courage, and made an impact that has lasted until our day. The issues mentioned above are by no means the only benefits resulting from the labor of the West Indian missionaries. They are only pointers to the much wider influence of these gallant Christians. Why should we continue to tell their story? We need no other reason than to praise them. We may even be inspired to emulate the efforts of these heroes, who sacrificed so much to plant the seed of the Gospel in our soil.¹⁵⁸

The inspiration that we get from their work should move us to rededicate ourselves afresh for action, for much depends on action. This story is a strong affirmation that wherever mission has succeeded, it has been the result of courageous faith, acted out by men and women who dared to trust in the guidance of an unseen God. It could be said of the West Indians that they lived by the Scripture, which says that “faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (HEB. 11 v.1 –

¹⁵⁷ Kpobi, *170 years*, 19.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 20.

NIV) The desire to rededicate ourselves for evangelism must be the reason for celebrating this story, in order that we also might leave a story worthy to be told over and over again.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹ Kpobi, 170 years, 19.

Ghanaian Missionaries

Three examples of this failure are the early converts: Jacobus Capitein, Carl Christian Reindorf and David Asante. They were Ghanaians, who were recruited to assist the European and West Indian missionaries in spreading Christianity throughout the Gold Coast. These Ghanaians became leaders in their communities, but they also lived in controversy most of their lives. Nevertheless, they succeeded in making important contributions.

Jacobus Capitein

By the 18th century, an economic boom built on slave trading had made Europe wealthy. At this time, the west coast of Ghana, then known as the Gold Coast, had its share of forts and castles. Elmina and other locations along the Cape Coast served as centers of trading and slavery. During this time, a young slave boy originally taken in slavery from Elmina caught the eye of a wealthy woman, who decided to adopt him. He was given the name Jacobus K. Capitein. He subsequently traveled to the Netherlands with his adoptive family, where he was educated and became the first African theology student.¹⁶⁰

He was ordained, and served as a pastor from 1717 to 1747. His thesis in college stated that God deliberately imposed slavery on Africa, the “Dark Continent” because that was the only way they could hear of the Gospel from the Europeans. Capitein believed God would teach the truth of Jesus and bring light to the people of Africa. He became famous for preaching theology, and he developed a theology specifically in support of slavery. This theology was very popular; since it encouraged Europeans to use

¹⁶⁰ David N. Kpobi, *Mission in Chains: The Life, Theology & Ministry of the Ex-Slave Jacobus E.J. Capitein* (Zoeteimeer: Ujtgeverij Boekencentrum, 1993), 5.

justify slavery through theology. When Capitein returned to the Gold Coast, he attempted to establish a mulatto school, but failed, and in 1842 he died, frustrated and bitter at the early age of 30.¹⁶¹

Carl Christian Reindorf

Carl Christian Reindorf (May 31, 1834 to July 1, 1917) was an evangelical pastor, scholar, trader, physician, and historian who worked with the Basel Mission and was the author of the historical classic, *A History of the Gold Coast and Asante*. Completed in 1889 and published in 1895, it drew on oral tradition to record an epoch of the African past, the outlines of which might otherwise have vanished beyond recall. He was born at Pram Pram, east of Accra, in 1834, to Carl Hackenburg Reindorf, a Danish soldier, and Anowah Cudjoe, a Ga woman from the Asare district of Accra. During his childhood, he was adopted by a fetish shrine called Digbla, and the shrine took him under its protection. He might not have become a Christian at all if he had not escaped from the fetish in 1840, and come to Accra. In Accra he attended school at Christiansborg Castle, and was baptized a Christian two years later, in 1844.¹⁶²

He left Christiansborg Castle in 1846 to attend the Basel Mission School under the Rev. Johannes Zimmerman (*q.v.*) [1825-76], but Zimmerman's way of teaching the Ga language displeased him. He left school and started trading, sometimes crossing the Volta River to trade in Eweland, to the east. But his parents wanted him to finish school, so he was brought back to the Basel Mission, where a high school had been established. After the bombardment of Christiansborg during the poll tax riots of 1854, the mission

¹⁶¹ Kpobi, *Mission in Chains*, 6.

¹⁶² L. H. Ofosu-Appiah, "Carl Christian Reindorf," *The Encyclopaedia Africana: Dictionary of African Biography* (New York, Reference Publications, Inc., 1997).

moved to Accra and then to Abokobi, 15 miles (24 km) away. Here a new mission house was built. Carl's education was interrupted again, as he worked as a catechist at Damfa (Danfa), in the same area. Here he taught his pupils to read Ga books, and interpreted the Bible for them.¹⁶³

In 1856, Reindorf composed a hymn (No. 259). He worked under the German missionary August Steinhauser, who sent him to Odumase in the Krobo district, about 50 miles (80 km) northeast of Accra, to see the chief, Odonkor Azzu. As a result of his visits, Azzu, who had already given one of his sons, Tei, to the Basel missionary Zimmerman to be educated, sent another three of his children to be trained by the mission. One of them later became Sir Emmanuel Mate Kole (*q.v.*). In 1857, during a stay in Odumase, Reindorf composed another Ga hymn (No. 343). He was appointed successor to Steinhauser at Abokobi, and during his period of service converted a fetish priest, Akoto Badu of Agbowo, to Christianity. He became a full catechist in 1857. In 1858 he took part in the short, local war between the Gas and the Krobos. After peace was made, he was transferred to Krobo in 1859 as a missionary, acting as assistant to Zimmerman. In 1860, Reindorf was transferred to Akropong-Akuapem as an assistant teacher at the Theological Seminary there.¹⁶⁴

He retired for a while in 1862 to his farm, called Hebron, near Aburi, a few miles away, and established a coffee plantation there. He was later asked to open a mission at Teshie, on the coast 10 mi (16 km) east of Accra, but found it difficult to make converts. He was transferred to Christiansborg, but again returned to Teshie to try to make

¹⁶³ Ofosu-Appiah, "Carl Christian Reindorf."

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

converts. Although he offered the children money to attend school, he was not successful in gaining converts. Reindorf was again transferred back to Christiansborg to teach in the new Basel Mission Middle School.¹⁶⁵ In 1866 he took part in the local war between the Adas (a Ga-Adangme group)¹⁶⁶ and the Awunas (Ewes from the Volta Region)¹⁶⁷, acting as assistant surgeon.¹⁶⁸

After the war he was appointed head teacher of the Osu Middle School. In 1869, he was appointed assistant superintendent of the Christiansborg Church, and later became a presbyter (i.e. a priest who acts as overseer of the congregation). In 1870, he took part in the Akwamu-Ga war (a local war in which the Gold Coast government supported the Gas), serving with a contingent from Christiansborg on the side of the Gas. After government troops defeated the Akwamus, he received a letter of encouragement from the Administrator, H. T. Ussher (in office from 1867-72, later governor from 1879-80), after he had welcomed a contingent from Lagos, in what is now Nigeria, with a song composed for the occasion.¹⁶⁹

He acted as a surgeon and treated several people for gunshot wounds. After the war he returned to the Mission. On October 13, 1872, he was ordained a full minister of the church, and stationed at Mayera, near Accra. He started a school at Mayera with 12 boys from Accra, and attracted boys to the school by paying for their clothing, tuition fees, board, and lodging. He preached in the neighboring villages and stirred up

¹⁶⁵ Ofosu-Appiah, "Carl Christian Reindorf."

¹⁶⁶ The Ga-Adangme form about 8.0% of the national population of Ghana.

¹⁶⁷ The Ewes are 12.7% of the Ghanaian population.

¹⁶⁸ Ofosu-Appiah, "Carl Christian Reindorf."

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

enthusiasm for Christianity, converting fetish priests and others. His travels enabled him to learn a good deal about medicinal herbs, and he trained others to diagnose diseases, thus saving the lives of several European missionaries. He stayed in Mayera for ten years, and in about 1882 was transferred to Christiansborg, where he remained another ten years. In 1883, he started the Basel Mission in Accra. In 1893, he was obliged by failing health to retire to his village, Hebron, where aside from farming; he did missionary work at Adenkrebi, where the Rev. Saeger had put him in charge of a Mission. In 1907, however, he again left Hebron to return to Christiansborg.¹⁷⁰

When work on the revision of the Ga Bible began, Reindorf decided to participate, and saw the revised version completed and published in 1912. But his great work, completed in 1889 and published in Basel in 1895, was his classic of historical scholarship, *History of the Gold Coast and Asante*. Although written by a man whose level of formal education was not high, it won him a permanent place in the annals of African history by preserving an oral tradition that would otherwise have disappeared. The work was written in English and Ga, and its preface shows that Reindorf was both a patriot and a nationalist, bent on leaving a memorial for posterity and setting an example for others to follow. Reindorf died in 1917.¹⁷¹

According to Kwame Bediako, the achievement of Reindorf gains even greater significance when viewed by the Christian missionary context which produced him, and in which he lived and worked. During his association with Johannes Zimmerman at Christiansborg and later at Abokobi, Reindorf came into contact with the peculiar

¹⁷⁰Ofosu-Appiah, "Carl Christian Reindorf."

¹⁷¹Ibid.

integration of church planting, education and agriculture and other industrial training which became a hall mark of the Basel Mission's work in the Gold Coast, and which he notes as among the successes of his time.¹⁷²

David Asante

In contrast, David Asante (December 23, 1834-October 13, 1892), a missionary with the famous Basel (Lutheran) Mission, helped to make Twi the powerful literary language it is today. The son of Owusu-Akyem, an Akropong citizen of the ruling Asona clan, David Asante was one of the first converts to Christianity in his birthplace, Akropong, capital of Akuapem, a state 30 miles (48 km) northeast of Accra. He began his education as a houseboy to Basel missionaries, the Revs. J.F. Widmann and J.C. Dieterle, eventually becoming their personal assistant. His first task was to learn English; his mother tongue, Twi, was not then a written language. He was an intelligent and industrious scholar, and was baptized a Christian on Christmas Day, 1847 at the age of 17. In 1848, Asante became one of the five foundation pupils of the Akropong Basel Mission Seminary, or training college. There he studied for five years, learning German as well as Greek, Latin, and Hebrew.¹⁷³

After qualifying as a teacher-catechist, Asante was appointed to Larteh, 5 mi (8 km) southeast of Akropong where he combated fetishism and other un-Christian customs. He established a congregation there, and built the mission house which was still standing in the mid-1970s, along with a chapel. From Larteh he was transferred to Gyadam, then the capital of Akyem Kotoku on the Birem River about 15 miles (24 km) north of Kyebi.

¹⁷² Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995), 46.

¹⁷³ Addo-Fening, *Akyem Abuakwa 1700-1941*, 59.

Here his task was to help the Rev. Simon Süß, who was trying to establish a congregation there. Here, too, he found he had to combat fetishism and related practices. He was later transferred to the Akropong Seminary as a teacher, and also collaborated with the Rev. J. G. Christaller (q.v.) in the writing of Twi books for schools.¹⁷⁴

In 1857, the church sent him to Basel, Switzerland, where he trained as a pastor. His brother Oforikae joined him there in 1860, but died of tuberculosis a year later. David Asante completed his studies in 1862, was ordained a pastor in the Lutheran Church and then in June, returned home to serve the Mission at Akropong, then under Widmann's direction. He was transferred to Larteh after his marriage on July 28, 1864, to Lydia Martha, a teacher in the girls' boarding school at Abokobi. At Larteh, Asante found that Christians were being persecuted, and the same practices he had condemned in the 1850s were continuing. In 1871, he was sent on a dangerous mission to Begoro, north of Kyebi, one of the divisions of the Akyem Abuakwa state, to learn what he could about two Basel missionaries, the Revs. Friederich A. Ramseyer and J. Kühne, who had been captured by the Asante. He was unable to obtain information, but the missionaries were released after the British occupation of the Asante capital Kumasi, in the Sagrenti War of 1873-74.¹⁷⁵

In 1872, Asante was sent to Kukurantumi, another division of Akyem Abuakwa, to establish a mission station there. He opened a school for converts, and built a stable congregation, consisting mainly of freed slaves. In 1875, he was transferred to Kyebi to replace a European missionary. Here he met with the strongest opposition he was to encounter throughout his career. It came from the *Okyenhene* (paramount chief of Akyem

¹⁷⁴ Addo-Fening, *Akyem Abuakwa 1700-1941*, 59.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

Abuakwa), Amoako Atta I (*q.v.*), who was Asante's cousin, as well as from the chief's mother. The quarrel stemmed from Amoako Atta's opposition to the conversion of slaves to Christianity, and to the abolition of slavery by the British. Amoako Atta and his entourage felt that Christianization and the abolition of slavery were undermining their power and revenue.¹⁷⁶

He felt that the Christians were free to defy his authority because they lived in separate communities, and regarded the missionaries as their leaders. Asante, who supported both the conversion of slaves and the abolition of slavery, insisted on having his way despite the persecution of Christians, which continued. Finally, matters came to a head and the British government asked the Basel Mission to transfer Asante out of Kyebi. Persecution of the Christians continued after his departure. Asante was next transferred to another non-Christian community at Nsakyé, near Aburi, about 20 miles (32 km) north of Accra. Here his work was made difficult because mulattoes from Accra, who were regarded by Africans as Europeans and Christians, continued to consult the local fetish, named "Onyaawonsu"¹⁷⁷ ("Soothsayer".) Asante eventually managed to check this practice, and established a stable congregation.

He was later sent to Anum, on the east bank of the Volta, 50 miles (80 km) inland, to reopen a mission station that had been abandoned due to the Asante and Togoland wars of the period. He revived enthusiasm for Christianity in the area, traveling as far as Palimé in Togo, and Salaga in what is now northern Ghana, to promote his missionary work.

¹⁷⁶ Addo-Fening, *Akyem Abuakwa 1700-1941*, 59.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

Asante also urged the mission to begin work in the states of Buem and Krakye (Krachi), both located in what is now the Volta Region of Ghana. Here he met with opposition from the local population, who still worshipped a god called Odente. In 1885, Asante was given a period of rest, which he used to travel through the Central Province of the Gold Coast (between Accra and Takoradi), selling copies of the Twi Bible, which he had helped Christaller translate.¹⁷⁸

Asante visited Cape Coast and Saltpond, as well as Kumasi, where he met with Ramseyer, the Basel missionary who had been held there as a captive of the Asante from 1869-1874. He was transferred back to Akropong in 1888, but was unpopular among the people there because of his frankness in prosecuting abuses. He often defended Christian converts before the tribunal of the *Omanhene* (paramount chief) of Akropong. During his missionary life, Asante produced several books in Twi, among them translations of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, a book about ancient heathenism in Germany, and a German history book, which became known as the *Kapa History*. He wrote a Twi hymn, coined new Twi words, and contributed to the establishment of Twi as a literary language.¹⁷⁹

Asante was appointed to lead the Kyebi mission, and proceeded to antagonize his own people, including his direct cousin Amoako Atta I, who was the chief. Atta I had mistakenly thought that Asante, being an Akan and son of a member of the royal family, could be relied upon to protect the cherished beliefs and customs of his court. Asante

¹⁷⁸ Addo-Fening, *Akyem Abuakwa 1700-1941*.

¹⁷⁹ Ofosu-Appiah, *Carl Christian Reindorf*.

professed sympathy with Atta I's concern about conversion among his royal slaves and palace functionaries, but subsequent events revealed his real thoughts to the contrary.¹⁸⁰

Asante worked tirelessly to undermine Atta I as chief. He seemed to have singled him out for discrimination and embarrassment, and interfered with his jurisdiction. Using Asante, the Basel Missionaries had made no secret of their prejudice against the Akyem judicial system since the 1860's. The cumulative effect of Asante's intimidation of the *Okyenhene* and his chiefs between 1874 and 1877 created a climate of frustration and despair. The exodus of freed slaves reduced the population, and drastically worsened the problem of scarce food supplies. Asante even went to the extent of taking the chief to court, which resulted in the chief's imprisonment. He succeeded in creating an atmosphere of fear, and encouraged the chief's former slaves to tell lies in order to be set free. This undermined the authority of the royal family, and within a year of their chief's exile, many members of the court were left bankrupt. Asante died at Akropong in 1892.¹⁸¹

Jacobus Capitein chose to glorify slavery, and returned to Africa to lead by that example. He failed miserably. When Capitein returned to the Gold Coast, he was unable to relate to his own people, since the plans he had for the community ran contrary to their way of life. Capitein's failure therefore was due to the lack of inclusiveness with the community he lived in. Even though Capitein and Asante were born into the Akan tribe, they displayed a lack of tolerance for their communities after being converted to Christianity/*Kristosom*. Just like Capitein before him, David Asante chose to take a

¹⁸⁰Addo-Fening, *Akyem Abuakwa 1700-1941*, 59.

¹⁸¹Noel Smith, *The Churches*, 65.

confrontational attitude towards proponents of the local culture. Asante, who was related to the royal family in his region, was so deliberate in flouting the authority of the chief that the British colonial government intervened to remove him.

Asante's methods, like those of other early missionaries, were not to seek peaceful coexistence, but rather an eradication of culture and a total inculturation of the people of his community. Reindorf on the other hand, was successful in using his Christianity and education to help, by writing books in their language and working within the community. One common thread runs through the lives of all of these missionaries; they became embroiled in the political issues of the times, and factional and local warfare. This hurt their cause. For peaceful coexistence, three things should happen:

- 1) Gain an understanding of the people
- 2) Have a respect for what they believe in and
- 3) Encourage dialogue in order the help them understand you.

The Tenets of Presbyterianism

Presbyterianism has a glorious history and a priceless heritage. In the words of C.G. Singers, Presbyterianism does not lie in what men have done or accomplished under their own power, but in what God has seen fit to do through those who have been so dedicated to the great truths of the scriptures, as to be willing to give their very lives for the faith, which was more than life to them. Presbyterianism is both a system of church government and a defined system of beliefs. In his contribution to the above subject, Dr. Sam Prempeh opines that during the era of the reformation, reformers like Zwingli and Calvin developed a church order, which has come to be associated with Presbyterianism.¹⁸²

In Psalm 11:3, The Psalmist queries, “When the foundations are being destroyed, what will the righteous do?” Today, the basic foundations of the Presbyterian Church are being destroyed for lack of knowledge. Presbyterianism is a term many people use but do not understand. We believe at the end of the study, all members could explain in their own way what Presbyterianism stands for. In order to understand how the church came to be associated with the Presbyterian form of government, we must study the pietistic movements of Spenser, Franke and others. Pietism was a movement that promoted radical Christianity in Germany in the 18th century. They believed the type of Christianity then prevailing was an eyesore, in urgent need of reform. They produced communities of people who were marked by a keen sense of the importance of personal

¹⁸²Presbyterian Church of Ghana, *170 Years*, 62.

conversion to Christ, of strong Christian fellowship of prayer, of deep reverence for the Bible, and a deep commitment to the spread of the Gospel.¹⁸³

The Basel mission therefore emphasized personal conversion, prayer, faith in God, and commitment to the word of God. They also laid emphasis on Christian fellowship through morning devotions, and frequent fellowship. The idea of 'Salem' was to help the then Believers to build closer relationships with their Creator. The Basel mission churches were not strictly 'Presbyterian' churches. That name arrived with Scottish missionaries who replaced German missionaries during the First World War, and stayed to continue the work of the Basel mission. Through diplomatic negotiations, the United Free Church of Scotland accepted responsibility to supervise the work of the Basel mission in the Gold Coast.¹⁸⁴

Prempeh, in a Christian Messenger article, denotes that the United Free Church of Scotland was closely related to Calvinism through John Knox, who had studied under Calvin in Geneva. That church therefore became instrumental in the development of Presbyterianism in both Scotland and Ghana. As noted earlier, Presbyterianism is both a system of church government and a system of belief. It offers structure as well as belief. Basically, there are three tendencies in church government:

1. First, the one in which rule is exercised by Bishops as appointed rulers of the church, e.g. the Roman Catholic Church or the Anglican Church.
2. Second, the one in which power remains in the hands of the hands of the congregation: e.g. Baptist Church.
3. Third, the one in which rule is exercised in a more democratic way, by and through "Courts" or Committees.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ Presbyterian Church of Ghana, *170 Years*, 62.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

The Presbyterian system governs through various "Courts", Local session, District session, Presbyteries and Synods (now called General Assembly). While all Christians and all churches readily acknowledge Christ as true head of the church, the Presbyterian form of church takes this idea most seriously of all, by making it a foundational idea in its structure. According to W.S Reid, 'The primary presupposition of Presbyterianism is that the risen Christ is the only head of the church. He rules his people by his Word and Spirit, directing believers as a whole'. Bediako insists that in the Presbyterian ideal, Christ as Head of the church rules not through human agents like bishops, pastors or clergy, but by his Word and Spirit, directing all believers as a whole.¹⁸⁶

Thus, there is no special group of people who by laying on of hands or through special revelation have authority to rule the community. All members of the church select leaders, through recognizing their abilities given by God for each particular office. The foundation of the structure of the Presbyterian system is therefore the local session of elders, elected by the members and led by the pastor, who is referred to as 'the teaching elder'. In the same sense, major decisions by the General Assembly, the highest court or decision-making bodies within the church are often referred for debate to the Presbyteries during their Sessions. Ideally therefore, major decisions are ratified by the actual membership of the church.¹⁸⁷

The Church

Presbyterians also believe that the church of God is one, in the form of the holy Catholic Church (the universal unity of Christ's Body in time and eternity.) Just as a vine

¹⁸⁶ Presbyterian Church of Ghana, *170 Years*, 62.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

and its branches comprise a whole, Christ and all those who derive their life from Him comprise a single Body, as the universal church. This church may not be identified with any denomination or body on earth, for it exists wherever a true child of God may be found. Since we believe in the holy Catholic Church, we also believe in the communion of saints, the corporate practices of the Christian life.

Christian living therefore is not a solitary thing. Presbyterians believe that: Christians congregate for worship and we grow in grace, and obtain mutual edification. In the church the Word is exposed, the sacraments are administered, government and discipline is exercised according to the New Testament pattern so as to enlarge the household of faith. A cardinal foundation of Presbyterians in relation to the church is the belief that Christ is the Head of the church, and that there is no human intermediary between God and human, except Christ alone.¹⁸⁸

Church and State at Akropong

The Church at Akropong has been very fortunate in that it has enjoyed a friendly relationship with local authorities. It is true that at one time the Christian community lived separately from the non-Christian population. This distinction in terms of residential pattern has become somewhat blurred over the years. It is also good to realize that the persecution that characterized the work in places like Kyebi did not occur at Akropong.

When the first missionaries arrived, Paramount Chief Addo Dankwa 1 welcomed them. We also know that the first sanctuary of Akropong Church was a gift from the Paramount Chief. In a gesture of understanding, Paramount Chief Kwame

¹⁸⁸ Presbyterian Church of Ghana, *170 Years*, 64.

Tawiah and his elders even agreed to modify a major celebration to suit the needs of the church. Before the Basel Mission arrived at Akropong, the celebration of Akwasidae was a very big cultural affair, when customary rites were performed, including the firing of guns. When these celebrations fell on a Sunday, they were very noisy, and for Christians the day could not be a day of rest and worship. Furthermore, many Christians were tempted forego church, and join in the Akwasidae celebrations. This greatly disturbed the missionaries, who appealed to the Paramount Chief Kwame Tawiah to review the celebration of the festival on Sundays.¹⁸⁹

After consultation with his sub-chiefs and elders, Paramount Chief Kwame Tawiah agreed to modify the Akwasidae celebrations. Nana Kwame Tawiah purchased a cow and sacrificed it in customary rites to his forefathers, informing them that henceforth there would not be a full celebration of the Akwasidae festival on Sundays. However, the Akwasidae festival would be celebrated as customary on Wednesdays. Thus, since the time of Nana Kwame Tawiah, this has been the situation, contrary to all other Akan states in the country.

Period of Growth of Kristosom 1850-1922

The steady flow of teachers and catechists allowed the gospel to spread from the mission to places like Aburi, Larteh, Mampong and Adukrom in Akuapem, and eventually beyond the region. It was from Akropong that missionary Simon Siis left to settle at Gyadam in Akyem in 1853, and the man who was sent to aid Siis was none other than David Asante.

¹⁸⁹Presbyterian Church of Ghana, *170 Years*, 42.

Theophilus Opoku also did much pioneering work in Larteh. During the early phase of Opoku's work in Larteh, the people drove him out, sending him back to Akropong, stating that they preferred a white agent, but Opoku finally won over. As the Akropong church grew, one of the vital needs of the Church was a place to worship. The first church, built in 1848 as a gift from Nana Kwadade I, was located near the present home of the Krontihene. This church, a small wooden structure, served as a place of worship until a second church was built in 1868. The previous year, the Basel Home committee had voted 300 shillings to build a new building at Akropong to accommodate the growing church, and to mark the jubilee of the work of the Basel Mission on the Gold Coast. The actual construction of the work began on 26 September 1867, and was completed in 23rd December 1868.

The second church building was a two-story stone building. During the period that the building was being used, the balcony was reserved for the use of pupils at the Middle School and students at the Training College and Seminary. Rev. Mader named it "Christ Church" and performed the dedication ceremony; to this day, the church is called by this name. Akropong church joyfully worshipped for many years in the building, until it was struck by lightning in 1910. Until 1882, the Akropong Church was under the oversight of European missionary pastors. Perhaps the most distinguished of these was Rev. G. Widmann, who ministered from 1873-1882. Widmann died at Akropong and was buried in the first church cemetery located at the Presbyterian Training College.

In 1882, a descendant of the original West Indian families, Rev. Peter Hall was appointed as the first African pastor of the church. From 1882-1888, Rev. Hall labored at Akropong other towns within the bounds of the Akropong District. Hall secured a

second cemetery for the church. The original cemetery of the Basel Mission was located at the present site of the Presbyterian Training College near the College Chapel. The cemetery was used until 1885. At that time, the Basel Mission purchased land from Chief Baagyiri of Abiriw to establish another cemetery. A portion of the second cemetery was set aside during the pastorate of the Rev. Peter Hall in 1913 for the burial of the members of the royal families.

Isn't it ironic that the chiefs, who hitherto owned the land and could apportion it in any way they wanted, should now have to go to the missionaries for permission to use their own land?

The Rev. Peter Hall and the Session designated a portion of the cemetery for burial of the Asona royal clan. The clan had requested space, and if a place had not been provided for them, they would have continued to bury their members at Amamprobi. Paramount Chief Ofori Kuma accepted this arrangement, and many important members of the Asona clan have been interred at the second cemetery. These include Nana Aye (Mrs. Amelia Koranteng), Queen Mother Sakyibea II, Jane Awere and Victoria Ofeibea Mate. Although the cemetery closed in the early nineteen-fifties, ministers are still buried in this second cemetery. Among the important personalities buried in the second cemetery after the official closure was the President of the Second Republic of Ghana, Edward Akuffo Addo.

When President Akuffo Addo, who had also been a distinguished lawyer and served as Chief Justice, died in 1979, the Government honored him with a state burial. With permission from the Rev. D.O. Kwabong and the local session, the Government built a mausoleum for Akuffo at the cemetery. Under the leadership of Rev. Reynolds,

the church decided to build a new chapel, and people gave generously to the building fund. However, before sufficient funds had been collected for the construction, Rev. Reynolds was transferred to Anum, and was replaced by Rev. Peter Hall in 1913. Rev. Hall did all he could in collecting money for the building fund, but the building of a new church was postponed, due to the outbreak of World War I in 1914.

Rev. Peter Hall served the mission at Akropong until his retirement in 1922. The second tenure of Rev. Peter Hall proved to be a very difficult period. The three main issues that faced the church were the rapid expansion of the cocoa industry, the forced departure of the Basel Missionaries and the need for a new church building at Akropong. The rapid expansion of the cocoa industry resulted in the loss of large number of people from the congregation, who left Akropong to settle on plantations. During this period, the general topic of conversation was cocoa, and the driving interest for most people was how to maximize their profits from that industry. In addition, the church faced the problems of wartime.

Perhaps the most tragic aspect of war for the church was repatriation of the Swiss and German missionaries by the British government in October 1917. Since the vast majority of these missionaries were stationed at Akropong, the local church keenly felt their departure. Rev. Peter Hall was one of the most splendid ministers ever to take charge of the Akropong church. After fifty years of church work, he retired in 1922. At his retirement, the Synod of the Church arranged a farewell service at which Rev. Hall was presented with 460 shillings, a huge sum in those days. The end of Rev. Hall's ministry marked a period of successful expansion, and able African leadership. Beyond

Reverend Hall, Asare, Opoku and Reynolds left their marks, and are gratefully remembered for their work.

The Presbyterian Church and the Ghanaian Culture: Conflicts and Accommodations

Professor Kofi Asare Opoku

The missionaries arrived with a purpose, and those who bucked the system were penalized. To illustrate, I will use the life of two prominent Ghanaians: the late Dr. Ephraim Kwaku Amu, and another who is very much alive, Professor Kofi Asare Opoku. Professor Opoku's grandfather, Theophilus Opoku was the first African to be ordained in Ghana, in 1872. Even though Professor Opoku graduated from seminary, he became interested in African Traditional Religion and decided to explore it further. He made the decision not to be ordained, since he felt the ordination would restrict which subject matter he could pursue. Opoku has delivered numerous lectures on African culture and world religions across the globe in the past 40 years. Opoku, as the former co-chair of Lafayette's African studies program, has extensive knowledge of African culture and its worldwide effect.

He holds degrees from Yale University Divinity School and the University of Ghana, and has taught courses on Africa's religions, traditions, and cultures for 20 years. Throughout the 1980s, he was heavily involved with Ghana's Institute of African Studies. Opoku has published several books, including *West African Traditional Religion* (1978), *Healing for God's World: Remedies from Three Continents*, with Kim Yong-Bock and Antoinette C. Wire (1991); *Hearing and Keeping: Akan Proverbs* (1997); and *Speak to the Winds: Proverbs from Africa* (1975). Opoku has also authored numerous articles and papers on African culture, spirituality, and religions and their impact on Western ideas.

Opoku says his own interest, and breadth of experience teaching African culture has led him to view the late Paul Robeson as a scholar of African culture. "Africa is not

just a geographical location, Africa is an idea, an inspiration,” Opoku says. “From my understanding of the life and work of Paul Robeson, he understood it that way. He got a lot of inspiration from Africa and from being an African, and this enabled him to take a stand and to do the type of things he did.”

Opoku explains that his presentation centering on the African proverb “The offspring of an elephant will never be a dwarf”, will highlight how Robeson not only found inspiration in Africa, but that his spiritual connection to the continent gave him the grounding and confidence he needed to succeed in his pioneering accomplishments. “Essentially, before anyone can make an impact on another, that person must be grounded in something,” Opoku says.

Just as Opoku hopes others learn from his lecture, he anticipates gaining insight himself, into Robeson. “Growing up [in Africa], I knew his songs and knew of him as an actor, but there wasn’t much depth to it,” Opoku says. “As I grew up and began to read more and understand more, I came to appreciate the enormity of his stature and the enormity of his contributions to America and the world.

He was acclaimed worldwide not only for his singing ability, but for his stature and what he stood for -- his commitment to many freedoms -- which was an ideal all people would want.” Opoku says he wants to gather enough information about Robeson’s life to write a children’s book about him in his native language. There are so many Ghanaians who have spearheaded the cultural identity issue. They have sacrificed everything, making it a life-long journey, thus creating avenues that allow us to follow their path.

Dr. Ephraim Amu

One such Ghanaian saint is Dr. Ephraim Kwaku Amu, who made great contributions to the development of the church, education, morality, youth, agriculture, nutrition, Ghanaian cultural nationalism, and especially the evolution of Ghanaian music. This hero refused to be interviewed or to have a biography written about him, until recently. Dr. Amu decided to cooperate when he saw an excellent biography on Dr. Joseph Emmanuel Kweggir Aggrey, a famous scholar of Ghanaian history (October 18, 1875 to July 30, 1927.)¹⁹⁰

This book gave Dr. Amu inspiration, and he agreed to be interviewed so that later generations may find some useful help from the story of his life. Dr. Amu composed the music to *Yen Ara Asaase Ni*, which became the Ghanaian National Anthem. In his biography, Dr. Amu acknowledges the teaching profession, and dedicates his story to teachers in Gold Coast and Ghana, “Who are proud of their native culture, devoted to their Christian beliefs, and whose lives inspire our musical, cultural and spiritual quests.”¹⁹¹

Hebrews 13.7 says: “We must remember our teachers who taught us *the word of God. We must read the story of their lives and follow their footsteps*”. Africans and black people in general are created from one source, in the image of God. Why then do we have divisions amongst ourselves? Just because Europe succeeded in dividing us, does that mean we should agree with that decision? My brothers and sisters, we are all one

¹⁹⁰ Fred Agyemang, *Amu the African: A study in Vision and Courage* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, Christian Council of Ghana, 1988) , 7

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

race -- Africans created in the image of God -- and we should be proud of that. We need unity in order to bring about the kingdom of God on earth.

Dr. Amu was born in Peki in the Volta Region of Ghana in 1899. Missionaries from Bremen, Germany had established a mission nearby, at Keta. The Rev. Rudolph Mallet baptized Amu with the Christian name Ephraim. Raised by disciplined parents in a rural community, native music, drumming and dancing were part and parcel of community life. He benefited from the nurturing environment of his home, enjoying the company of his sisters, with whom he spent much of his time. Singing came naturally to Amu's family. In the household, the children learned proverbs like "*som wo ho nye akoo*" which means "Self-help is no slavery," and so they learned to be self-sufficient.

Since he spent most of his time with his sisters, Amu did not start school early, but once he did, he progressed well enough in a short period of time to be accepted to an age-appropriate class.¹⁹² Amu's love for music and agriculture became apparent in the middle school, and helped his education to progress. As a young boy, he enjoyed listening to church music and singing bands in his community. Amu was inspired by his music teacher, Mr. Ntem. Mr. Ntem offered to teach him music in return for Amu's help on his farm every Saturday. In December of 1915, during his final year of boarding school, Amu was confirmed and decided to become a teacher in the church. He was admitted to the Abetifi Teachers Seminary.¹⁹³

At Seminary, the authorities were careful in their selection of students for admission to seminary. One had to pass the highly competitive entrance examination,

¹⁹² Agyemang, *Amu the African*, 13.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

and be certified by his local pastor or headmaster as a lad of good character, suitable for work in Christian schools and congregations. Upon acceptance at Abetifi, Amu and two other students had to walk a distance of about 150 miles to begin school.

As a teacher, Amu was very strict, and made sure his students dressed to conform to the moral austerity of the church. He was influenced by the Lord Jesus Christ's words, "If anyone will follow me, let him deny himself, take up the cross and follow me." Dr Amu was a founder and member of the Akropong College Aggrey Students' Union which who undertook voluntary work, visiting the sick and doing what was possible for the aged and needy. They also visited villages and hamlets to evangelize on Sunday mornings.

In a way, Dr. Amu's life was similar to Dr. Aggrey's. Dr. Amu believed in using African cultural artifacts, technological and social inventions. At Akropong, the word "*Owura*" became more meaningful than the title "Mister."¹⁹⁴ It was Amu who selected Twi African cultural names for four new dormitories: Dormitory 1 was named "*Ti koro nko agina*", meaning "Two heads are better than one." Dormitory 2 was named "*Akyekyere ne nwaw*", which, in translation, means "The tortoise and the snail," but also means "Peaceful co-existence." Dormitory 3 was called "*Pinido*" which means "Do your best in all you do; get ahead." Dormitory 4 was named "*Afuntumireku, denkyemmireku*," which means "Two animals with one stomach," or unity in diversity.¹⁹⁵

Amu learned these Twi proverbs and their meanings from two sons of the Paramount chief, Nana Kwesi Akuffo of Akropong. These boys taught him drumming,

¹⁹⁴ Agyemang, *Amu the African*, 33.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 34.

and traditional Akuapem culture. Amu also had the opportunity of meeting the Queen Mother, who enjoyed his song, *Meko Ma ko da na mada preko*, based on Psalm 4. Amu's contribution to African culture has been tremendous, and we should celebrate him.

CHAPTER 2 THE CHALLENGE

Nea onim bebea ofre yɛ obia otiase afebb -African Proverb
A person who is in touch with his or her origins is a person who will never die

Challenge Statement

The early Christian Movement in Ghana presented the native rituals and festivals as antithetical to the Christian faith. As a result, many Ghanaian Christians have a disdain for such celebrations. This project will investigate the differences between *Onyamesom* (Worship of God) and *Kristosom* (Christianity or Christian Worship) and seek to make connections between them as part of a larger effort to deepen the process of inculturation of the Christian faith.

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF CHALLENGE STATEMENT

During my numerous trips home to Akropong, I developed a close relationship to two chiefs who were earlier acquaintances, about my age group, and who are devout Christians. One is the chief of Akropong and the other is the chief of Mamfe; the town which celebrates the Asafosa Peace Ritual. In conducting some of the earlier NYTS workshops on Christianity and African Culture in my hometown of Akropong, I invited the two chiefs to participate in the program.

Since the two chiefs sometimes found themselves at odds with the church establishment, we offered to sponsor a dialogue between the chiefs and the church. Even though the chiefs showed up, the church leadership chose not to be represented. During the discussion, it came out that the youth and the church have a negative perception of some aspects of the Tradition. The youth who were present wanted to know how the chiefs felt about certain rituals that were performed prior to different seasons and festivals.

In response, the chiefs explained that the youth have been given many opportunities to understand what goes on at the palaces; and yet none of the youth from the church have ever presented themselves to listen to understand, because they have been negatively indoctrinated by the church. This indoctrination took the form of the youth being told by the church leadership that the rituals are anti-Christian. In other words, the very people who should know what goes on because they are of the next generation, are refusing to listen and understand what goes on; and yet they are denigrating traditions they do not fully understand. Church leadership has even refused to include certain groups in the township, because of their activities. Shouldn't the

church be inclusive, in order to educate non-believers as to what God is, and bring those who are “lost” – who have not been saved through Jesus Christ, into the fold?

Christianity, which was foreign to the Traditional Religion, was presented by the missionaries as if both could not coexist. Why can't one be a Christian and believe in the Traditional Religion? This is at the heart and soul of my project and why I believe it is necessary to have an inclusive dialogue that will inform the whole community about the values that the Tradition and Culture bring to humanity.

Members of the site team were excited about this challenge statement, and they came up with several good parallels in the scripture that could be found in Traditional Religion. Most of the site team members having been part of the Winterim seminar held at Akropong in January 2008 were part of the discussion with the chiefs. They visited some of the natural habitats, and could sense the spirituality in the essence of Traditional Religion. Even in the traditional set up, you are still expected to be morally and spiritually good. There should be no negativity. Kwame Bediako puts it this way: “Yet the view of sin as antisocial is also biblically valid; sin is indeed sin against another person and the community's interest. But human beings are the creation of God, created in God's image, so social sin is also sin against God.”¹⁹⁶ The discussion centered on spirituality in Traditional Religion and some of the similarities are as follows:

When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man

¹⁹⁶Bediako, Kwame, *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa, History and Experience* (Maryknoll New York, Orbis Books), 26.

is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation."
(Matthew 12: 43-45)

When you repent of your sins and give your life to God, you are filled with His goodness and His mercy. However, if you do not follow his steps and fill your house with his goodness, you will be filled with spirits that do not bode well for you.

You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You[a] must be born again.'
8The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." (John 3:7-8)

The site team also held a discussion about the Asafosa Peace Ritual and the spirituality surrounding the ritual. It was agreed that I should explore and research into the Peace Ritual and the similarities to rituals in the Bible.

So in order to deepen the Christian faith of the congregations of the Ghanaian Christian churches of New York and Ghana, I will investigate the similarities between *Onyamesom* and *Kristosom*.

To attain this goal, I will concentrate on two focus groups:

- 1) In Ghana, those who practice the Tradition Religion and who also identify themselves as Ghanaian Christian; and,
- 2) In the Diaspora, Ghanaian immigrant Christians and the community who are ready to accept what the Traditions can bring to the Christian experience.

CHAPTER 3 GOAL ONE – THE TEAM

Ti koro nko agina
One head does not go into council - Ghanaian proverb:

The commissioning took place on December 20, 2008 at Akropong in Ghana. Members of the local team joined members of the United States team, and the commissioning was performed by Rev. Daniel Nyante. All team members were provided with a participant journal to record their observations of the activities they witnessed. Rev. Nyante addressed the group and opened the proceedings with a prayer, and then he handed out the commissioning paper, goals of the project, and travel journals to all the team members.

He instructed team members about the reason behind the travel journal, as well as when he wanted to receive the travel journals - after each event. The next step was to recite the commissioning statement. After the team members read the statement, Rev. Nyante gave the charge to the team to go out, observe and provide feedback. He also went over the challenge statement, the goals and the schedule.

There was an issue with the shrine visit, which had originally been included in the schedule of activities but had been taken out of the schedule by Rev. Nyante. Rev. Nyante felt uncomfortable with the visit to the shrine, and so he decided to take it out of the schedule, due to pressure and advice from other factions. He was advised by some of the local pastors at Akropong that it was not a good idea for a pastor to visit the shrine,

and that if word should leak out that he had visited the shrine, the community might not take his ministry seriously.

Rev. Wanda Lundy and Kirk Lyons insisted that the visit to the shrine was important to the success of the demonstration project, and therefore must be included in the schedule of activities. Rev. Nyante reluctantly agreed to include the visit to the shrine in the schedule, and so Prof. Opoku contacted the shrine to set a date when we might visit as a group. The commissioning ended with a prayer by Kirk Lyons.

LIST OF COMMISSIONED TEAM MEMBERS

1. Wanda Lundy - Adjunct Professor of New York Theological Seminary
2. Curtis Lundy - Musician, husband of Dr. Wanda Lundy
3. Kirk Lyons - Pentecostal Minister and Adjunct professor at Union Theological seminary
4. Eva Shaw-Taylor - D. Min student at NYTS
5. Nina Smith - Member - St. Christopher's Episcopal Church, Maryland
6. Alyson Smith - Member - St. Christopher's Episcopal Church, Maryland
7. Kwasi Nyante - Member of Bethel Presbyterian Reformed Church
8. Kwaku Nyante - Member of Bethel Presbyterian Reformed Church
9. Isaac Mensah - Elder of Bethel Presbyterian Reformed Church
10. Love Mensah - Deacon of Bethel Presbyterian Reformed Church
11. Hazara Mohammed - Muslim, 2nd Year student, University of Ghana Legon
12. Joyce Boham - Methodist Church of Ghana
13. Dr. Mercy Oduyoye - Methodist Church of Ghana
14. Jeremiah Mensah - Methodist Church of Ghana
15. Christine Mensah - Catholic turned Jehovah's Witness

16. Mr. Oware - Grace Presbyterian Church, Akropong
17. Prof. Kofi Asare Opoku – Retired Professor of African Traditional Religion at Lafayette College, Pennsylvania
18. Dr. Elizabeth Amoah – Dept. of Religious Studies, University of Ghana
19. Rev. Abeka – Pastor, Grace Presbyterian Church, Akropong

At the commissioning the following questions were asked and statements made by the team members:

Prof. Opoku:

- Why are you limiting the dissemination of the project to only Ghanaians in the Diaspora, and not all Africans?
- The demo - worship of God worship of Christ - cannot just be limited this to ATR and Christianity. Write up focused on Christianity and African Traditional Religion –
- The heathen in his blindness bows down to wood and stone.

Prof. Mercy –

- The Muslims have the same history as Christians and ATR. Should include the Muslims from the start, as opposed to bringing the Muslims in after the fact. How will you explain the presence of one Muslim person in the team?
- The project/Institute will have to examine the impact of the Muslim faith on the Ghanaian culture - within the larger framework of the Institute.
- The students who are part of the project are they here? Have to pick up on that piece and respond to it. Have to be narrow or you will never finish.
- Is *Onyamesom* as developed as Christianity?
- Language problem - negative portrayal of the ATR - the word by which everyone goes by is *Abosomsom* - you will have to defend *Onyamesom* that ATR is the worship of what is valuable to you but not the worship of stones. The very idea that someone was worshipping a stone. Will have to defend the language - What are the specifics? State this clearly in the proposal.

Rev. Nyante

- That is what the research is about - trying to find out what is out there. Does not have a set of propositions. It is an informal religion, you are born into it - it is open - help us to establish the parameters for *Onyamesom*.
- Thanked Prof. Mercy, Opoku, and Wanda - Prof. Wanda and stated that the time is now - for him to have the courage to do what he has to do.

Other comments from the group:

- The preacher said there were certain places we should not go, like to an herbalist. They are scared that the charismatic churches are like the ATR practitioners.
- Were the missionaries asked to come here? Were they invited? Why did they come here?
- What if people from my country had come to their country? They believe that they were sent - Matthew 28 - they will be in Beijing.

On December 20, 2008 all the recruit team members from Ghana and United States met at Akropong for Orientation and Commissioning of the Institute for Diaspora and African Culture (TIDAC.) Each member received a travel schedule and journal to be used in the program. After the distribution of the travel journal, one of the professors, who is also a priest, prayed for God's blessing and guidance throughout the program. Rev. Daniel Nyante led the team in commissioning ceremony. Rev. Nyante also led us to pledge as part of the inauguration of the Institute of Diasporan and African Culture. The team was oriented on the program and the Institute. Rev. Nyante explained the objectives and challenge statement of the Demonstration Project.

He explained that the program seeks to identify various differences and similarities between *Onyamesom* and *Kristosom*, of the native religion and Christianity respectively and deepen the Christian faith of the congregations. Mamfe festival would be used as a case study. The topic *Onyamesom* raised several questions as to whether it

was too broad. Others suggested *Abosomsom* should have been appropriate. This pushed Rev Nyante to go further to define *Onyamesom*. He also explained that TIDAC would be a repository of African culture and literature for both Africans and the Diasporans, where they would be educated about the African culture and its importance in the contemporary world. The orientation and commission was completed by Rev. Nyante.

Nokware te se ɔdadeɛ, obaakofo nsa ntumi ntwɔ ho nhyia - Ghanaian Proverb:
Truth is like a baobab tree one person's arms cannot go around it

Teamwork is like truth as stated above, and it was important for a team to be put together to witness this journey. As the proverb says: *Ti korɔ nnkɔ agyina* - *One head does not go into council* and because of this saying, it was important to get a group together to share this experience. Diversification was also important on this journey, and so it was important for me to get a variety of people based on age, employment, good health, maturity, the intellectual ability to reason logically, with an interest in African Traditional Religion with no bias, an interest in religiosity, and most importantly with an interest in Africa and African culture.

Using these criteria, the project was enhanced through different viewpoints, and knowledge about the different activities we were engaged in. The youngest participant in the group was eighteen, and the oldest was seventy-five. It was interesting to get several points of view on the different activities. There was a bit of trepidation on the part of the younger participants when going to the shrine, because of what has been said about it; but the older members had had some connection with the shrine and so were okay with it. I was also very scared, because of what I was told by some of the local pastors who had heard stories about the shrine. Initially, I did cancel the visit to the shrine, but when some

of my team members insisted that there would be no defense for the ATR if we did not visit the shrine, I realized that I had to make the visit.

The group was diversified, in that there were African Americans, who had no knowledge of the shrine, Ghanaian Americans in the Diaspora, and Ghanaians who had left their motherland and had become naturalized American citizens, who had heard about the shrine and were curious to find out about it. There were Ghanaian Americans who had Ghanaian parents, but had been born in the United States and had lived there all their lives, with occasional visits to Ghana. There were also other team members from Ghana, who were students of religious studies at the University of Ghana, Legon. Of these one was a Ghanaian Muslim and two others were Christians of the Methodist and Jehovah's Witness faiths respectively – altogether, we had a very rich team. With this kind of group, it was important to get their thoughts after the visit in order to see whether the visit had made an impact.

It was important to make sure that the members of the team were in good health and were gainfully employed – this was because we did not want anyone who would come as a participant with a condition of getting paid to give the “right” answers. We wanted this journey to be a true spiritual journey for whoever participated in it. Good health was necessary because of the schedule that had been put in place; there were several activities and it was necessary to have all participants be a part of the group.

Maturity comes at all ages and just as someone could be matured at age 18, so could someone be still childish at age 60, so the maturity of the participants was very important for this group. It was necessary for all participants to be able to join in a healthy discussion of the issues and make valuable contributions to the discussions that

ensued after each visit. This was achieved when all participants took part in the discussions that ensued during the visit and the debriefing that followed.

The fact that the group was diversified made a great impact when there was an agreement as to the value of some of the activities. On their exposure to *Onyamesom*, one of the participants stated the following:

There were a lot of other insights and enlightenment moments that led me to discover that “Aha!” moment, when I said to myself that I must go back and ask about traditional names among Africans in Ghana. I was given a name I do not use, so I decided to ask about it, to at least know what kind of education I should help my community to receive after I have been enlightened. I intend to hold discussions regarding the possibility of using traditional names as my demonstration project.

The importance of having team members who lived in Ghana could not be emphasized enough. What did they understand about the African Traditional religion? What had they been told? When there are these “Aha” moments then you know that there has been some transformative aspects of this journey that has been worthwhile. There were Ghanaians who resided in close proximity of the shrine, but had never visited there; they were especially surprised to see biblical signs on the walls of the shrine.

The group was made up of pastors of different denominations: Pentecostal, Presbyterian, Presbyterian Reformed, Methodists, Episcopalians, students of Religious Studies from the University and members of the Institute of Women in Religion and Culture. The group was Christian, however to make the group more interesting, we invited a Muslim student from the University as well. The interest in religion was therefore established prior to the selection, and that was an important aspect of the selection process. All members of the group expressed their curiosity about the various activities involved in the demonstration project, and were anxious and excited to be a part of it.

Their interest and consistency was shown by the participation of the group. For some of the activities, participants had to leave very early to get to the meeting point and join other participants – as early as 5 am in the morning. Sometimes the group did not get back until late, but they were ready the next day for the next scheduled trip as planned. Their eagerness to participate in the various activities showed their interest in what the research was about.

Just like the baobab tree with its huge trunk, it was necessary to get this diversified group to hold hands, and wrap our minds around the activities of this trip. The group served this purpose with its diverse combination of ethnicity and beliefs.

Just as the proverb at the beginning of the section states: One head does not go into council. This is why I chose to have a team to go with me on my journey. The group was made up of a much diversified group with a combination of Ghanaians, African Americans, the youth and young and older adults. The age group was also diversified in that there was a broad spectrum from ages 18 through 75. I realized that all the criteria are necessary to accomplish some of the purposes of God; this is because diversity is in God's plan and that is why we are all different.

These values bring the goodness in us in order for us to realize the spirit of truth in the tasks we are involved in, bringing the full realization of what it means to create that unique environment. It takes someone who wants to search for the truth to prod the minds of knowledgeable people to bring out what the world needs to know; because until there is a good mixture of people with skills from various levels of society, there is no equilibrium.

The combination of differences made the group richer, with different kinds of knowledge coming together to make a whole cohesive group. The group meant that there would be shared opinions. Groups like this makes one take notice and realize that each little bit counts. This is how a community is formed, this adds to my leadership qualities; this adds to my ability to listen to all points of view and being able to dialogue with many. As the proverb ending this chapter states, one person cannot build a town so it makes sense to bring other varied opinions to help us build the society. The bible talks about different gifts and talents that make up the body (1 Corinthians 12: 4-14) and it really shows that with diversity, the body can become whole.

Obaako nkyekye kurow - Ghanaian Proverb
(One person cannot build a town)

CHAPTER 4

GOAL TWO – THE JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY

Adesua nyinaa yenya fi osuahu - Ghanaian Proverb:
All learning is acquired by experience

I decided to investigate the similarities between the Asafosa Peace Ritual and Holy Communion in order to deepen the Christian faith of the Ghanaian Christian congregations. Some of the festivals and rituals of the Ghanaian traditions date back before the missionaries came to the Gold Coast, and have parallels in the Bible. Even though my main focus was the Asafosa Peace Ritual, I scheduled other activities to further enhance my research into *Onyamesom* and *Kristosom*, and to see which of these activities actually enhanced Christianity.

There was a funeral ceremony in the town, and all participants were invited to attend. It turned out that there were five dead bodies at various places in the town; we visited three of the places before going to the funeral church service. At the service, the preacher that day was the son of one of the dead. One of the dead was a woman who did not have any children, but because she had been loving to the community, everyone came together to help in her burial.

The preacher talked about the impact of the shrines on people, and that Christians should realize that it is important for them to attend church in the same fashion that they go to the shrines. After the funeral church service, we met for a debriefing, then attended a workshop on *Onyamesom*. While conducting the funeral service, the preacher used the pulpit to criticize against African Traditional Religion. It is a frequent practice in Christian churches to preach against African culture, even though most church members

have no idea of what really goes on in the shrines. It is also an open secret that some of these same pastors make frequent visits to shrines, but refuse to admit this publicly.

A story is told of a pastor who went to a shrine in order to get “powers” to increase the size of his congregation. He had promised the head of the shrine that he would come back and pay a certain amount as a token of his gratitude. When his church prospered and his congregation grew, he totally and completely forgot his promise. One day while he was in church, the head of the shrine arrived to ask for payment as promised – that is when the scandal broke. Everyone was shocked that their “Christian” pastor had been dabbling in African Traditional Religion, and his church went under..... It was rather surprising that even during a funeral service; the pastor would find it necessary to criticize the practitioners of ATR.

The Asafosa Peace Ritual and its similarities to the Christian Holy Communion

The History of the Asafosa Peace Ritual (APC)

The Asafosa Peace Ritual is closely tied to the history of Mamfe Township, in the Akuapem District in the Eastern Region of Ghana, West Africa. According to oral tradition, the people of Mamfe used to live at Damurukuso, located near present day Obosomase in the Akuapem District in 1511. In those days, the people of Mamfe were farmers who lived in the forest and could easily be killed by wild animals. There was a lack of water at their location. The hunters of the tribe would go far and wide to search for water, because sometimes they would bring in a kill, but lack water with which to cook it.

The Asamoah family were said to be expert hunters, and it was during one of their hunting expeditions from Damurukuso that they saw rivers and streams flowing from a

big rock – water in abundance -- in the area. They returned often, and soon realized that the rivers and streams in the area flowed continuously. They discovered other sources of water not far from the original discovery, and when they realized that the soil was good for farming, they decided to inform the other four families about what they had found. The heads of the other families, namely Kwadwo Toku, Abe, Agyarko and Akote decided to go and see the land for themselves prior to making the decision to move. After visiting the location, they agreed with Asamoah that it would be better to relocate.

After discussion with their families, five of the families decided to move and make a home at the new location. The five families that settled at the present day Mamfe Township were Kwadwo Toku, Abe, Asamoah, Agyarko and Akote. They never went back to Damurukuso. The five families parceled out lands for each other, settling not too far from each other, but far enough to feel separate. Each farmer and his family lived in a particular area and farmed the land, but shared the use of essentials such as water and grazing land. By the end of the first year, they realized that they had made a good choice, and therefore called the area Kwaade, and the name has remained till today.

In order to live in harmony, the heads of the five families decided to set aside a specific time to settle disputes that had arisen between individuals as well as families, during the first year of their settlement.

On an appointed day, the head of each family was requested to bring a pot of palm wine to a meeting for sharing. To demonstrate that no one bore any ill will toward another, they poured the drinks they had brought in one common pot, and each of the five family heads drank portions of the mixed wine. The remainder was then shared among the members of the five families, accompanied by merry making, to symbolize the

togetherness of the families. Every year, they met to socialize and discuss what had happened to their families within the past year, to settle any disputes between clans, sharing sympathy with those who had lost members of their families, and to celebrate any good news. Every clan head would bring palm wine – a local wine made from the sap of the palm nut tree. After all disputes were settled, everyone would share the drinks they had brought together and would also share festivities together. This demonstration of togetherness was called “ASAFOSA NOM DA.” The name means clan drinking day, or the day of communal drinking.¹⁹⁷

This tradition continued for several years. At every meeting, some of the hunters began to report seeing an apparition: a very tall man with a big white dog standing in front of him. The man held a staff in his hand, but did not harm the people. Several hunters reported seeing this apparition at many meetings, until a daughter of one of the families became possessed by the spirit of the apparition. The spirit said that his name was Kwadwo Topré, and that he was a spirit, not a god. He desired peace and justice, and did not like blood. If the people who had settled on his land kept the peace, he would protect them and make sure no harm came to them. It was said that when someone became very ill, Topré would appear and put his hand on the person, who would then immediately recover. They began to revere him. Those who became possessed by the spirit of Topré were called Akomfo, and they lived to serve him. The people also built a house for the priest of Topré.

The priest of Topré would take the palm wine from the heads of the clans and pour it into the communal pot. The priest would then mix the drinks together, and taking

¹⁹⁷The brochure of the Mamfe Ohum Festival 2007 & the 10th Anniversary of the Enstoolment of Osabarima Ansah Sasraku III, 23

the first cup of the mixed palm wine, he would pray to *Onyankopong* – God -- and through Topré, ask for protection for the people, as well as peace, prosperity, happiness, long life and good health. After the prayers, the priest would put the mixed wine in the pots of the different clan heads and every member of the clan was to take a drink. This would go on until all the wine in the cauldron was finished.

Through the *obosom*, Topré would warn the people of misfortune, and tell them how to prevent it, so the people of Mamfe grew prosperous. There were a lot of inter-marriages between the original five families, and the community grew. There was a yearly ritual for Topré as well. Prior the Asafosa Peace Ritual, the elders of the town would go to the farm to prepare special wine, and bring offerings to Topré of yams, cocoyam, plantains, tomatoes, drinks, and firewood.

The Topré Okomfo would perform the necessary rites before the Asafosa Peace Ritual and in so doing; they would be silent participants during the ritual. Every year, as they celebrated the festival, the ritual would conclude the celebration. The festival continues every year to this day, and as the community has grown, so has the community pot, which is now similar to a large cauldron. A clan that had not been able to settle all disputes within their family could not partake of the Asafosa Peace Ritual, unless it was understood that by participating in the Peace Ritual the dispute was at an end, and could never be discussed again. By partaking of the ritual, all was forgotten and forgiven.

Prior to the Peace Ritual, there were certain rituals that had to be performed by Topré's priest. For three weeks before the ritual, there was to be no drumming, no unnecessary noise and no misbehaving. The priest and his elders would go to the farm and as they went, they would form a line, and no one could cross the line. If you

happened to be going to the farm around the same time, you would have to wait until every single one of the entourage had passed. When they were returning to the village, they also formed one line, led by the priest of Topré. No one was allowed to look back; if you did, you may not live to see the next year.

From there, they went directly for Topré's house, to meet and receive gifts. After receiving the gifts, they went to their homes to bathe, and then returned to the house to begin the ritual. The sub-chiefs would meet first and wait for the chief, who is called *Osabarima*. When *Osabarima* was seated, the APR would begin and *Osabarima* would call the heads of the families to pour their wine into the cauldron. The order of the families was as follows:

- 1) The Mankradohene
- 2) The Gyasehene
- 3) The Enyiresihene
- 4) The Ponehene
- 5) The Tufuhene

The *Osabarima* was the last to bring his wine to the pot. The Asamoah family did not participate in the bringing of the wine, but did participate in the drinking because they were seen as the ones who had brought the Mamfe family to that settlement. The *Osabarima* mixed the drink, and gave the heads of the families the drink from the communal pot. After the priest had prayed for the township, everyone drank the wine, just as it is done in Holy Communion. The priests of Topré became the chiefs or *Osabarima* of Mamfe, because they understood the spirit of the community and its protector, similar to the part played by church ministers today. If a clan could not resolve

an issue prior to the APR, they would go to the priests for resolution. It was a disgrace to the clan and the families involved if they could not participate in the APR, and so heads of the families would make sure that their disputes were resolved beforehand. Everyone was invited to partake in the APR, including children.

The Current Celebration of the Asafosa Peace Ritual

The schedule of the festival started on Sunday, and continued for the rest of the week.

Monday was a day of mourning for the dearly departed of the previous year, and so visits were made to all who had experienced death in their family.

Tuesday was a day for feasting. Each family would cook meals and share them with friends and relatives.

Wednesday and Thursday were set aside to discuss issues of development that would enhance the well-being of all families, while the merry-making continued.

Friday was a day of communal labor.

Saturday was the day of the Durbar, when the chief and elders would sit in state.

Sunday was a day for a non-denominational thanksgiving service.

According to the chief (Osabarima) the APR started in the 1600s, before arrival of Christianity in Africa, and is still celebrated today. Ordained Christian ministers are invited to the APR, and although some ministers, due to their personal beliefs, choose not to attend, there is always a minister who is ready and willing to participate. No one has said that Christians are not welcome to participate in the APR. To the Mamfe people, Topré was a manifestation of the power of God. Topré cannot be used for evil, and can

never be used to curse anyone. The festivities surrounding the APR are known as the *OHUM* Festival of Mamfe, Akuapem.

The present Mamfe is made up of the following clans:

Descendants of Agyarko	– Awurade Kese	- Chiefs of Mamfe
Descendants of Kwadwo Toku	– Awurade Ketewa	- Chiefs of Gyase
Descendants of Akote	- Pone	- Chiefs of Mankrado
Descendants of Abe	- Enyiresi	- Chiefs of Enyirensi
Descendants of Asamoah	- Akyeremade	- Chiefs of Kwahu ¹⁹⁸

Passover was meaningful to the Jews during the time of Jesus Christ, we need to remember that Jesus was a Jew when he died, and just as the Asafosa Ritual still has meaning to the people of Mamfe in their relationship with God.

The Peace Ritual

On December 21, at about 3:00 pm, the group left Akropong to Mamfe to observe the Asafosa Peace Ritual. When we arrived at the ritual grounds, we were seated and waited for the arrival of the sub chiefs and Mamfehene. (See Appendix for video and write-up) It was interesting to know that the team from the New York Theological Seminary was introduced, and then the team members introduced themselves individually and were asked to bring their drink for participation in the Ritual.

Prof. Opoku leading the team wished Nana a Happy New Year, and emphasized that:

We came to learn about the culture, since if you do not know our culture and tradition; you lose your identity”. Nana, thank you for inviting the team to the Ohum Festival. The culture originates from here, and as the linguist stated, they are following what Nananom left behind and that no

¹⁹⁸The brochure of the Mamfe Ohum Festival 2007 & the 10th Anniversary of the Enstoolment of Osabarima Ansah Sasraku III, 24

one tells folk tales to Kwaku Ananse¹⁹⁹, so please teach us what we need to know; again we wish Nana and the whole Mamfe Township, a Happy New Year.

After that the Mamfehene started his speech with “My friends of Akuapemang,” The chief, in his speech at the Ritual, acknowledged everyone present including the team from the New York Theological Seminary, his friend Rev. Dan Nyante, and Prof. Kofi Asare Opoku. “May another year begin! On Friday²⁰⁰, we will have a durbar. The history of Asafosa is as follows, our ancestors who started this Township, realized that after every year, it was important for them to sit down and make sure that there were no quarrels in the community. After settling all quarrels, every family brings a pot of palm wine to be mixed together, and then shared for drinking as a way of asking for togetherness, oneness, love and peace. God knows that there will always be strife - but His son Jesus Christ commanded his disciples to come together in communion for His remembrance. Our ritual began barely 500 years ago; however, it has been going on prior to the advent of Christianity in our country.

If you sort out all your differences that is when you can come and drink the Asafosa. He explained that there was a delay in the proceedings, because just before they started, they were informed that one of the families had an issue, so they stopped everything and went to the family house to resolve that issue. He compared it to the Holy Communion - where before you partake of the Holy Communion, you are to make sure that you have no quarrels with anyone. If you do not sort out your differences prior to drinking the Asafosa, after drinking it, you wipe out all the issues you may or may not

¹⁹⁹ Kwaku Ananse is a fictional figure who is at the center of tales of Ghanaian folklore.

²⁰⁰ The Durbar is usually held on Saturday but because of the run-off elections, it was to be held on a Friday in 2008.

have with someone. You in effect start off with a clean slate. He asked the Mamfe Township to live together in love and unity.

Below is the quote the chief said as he welcomed the team from NYTS:

We all look alike as brothers and sisters and when you go back, we will keep in touch; anytime you come to Ghana, please come and stay here with us. We are proud of our festival and are glad you decided to celebrate this festival with us.

This is what he said about the Asafosa Peace Ritual:

Asafosa Nsa means togetherness, oneness, love that exists in the community. We do not want any quarrels. We all know why we are here. We thank the Mamfehene, and our birth day is this day. We have examined all paths leading to Mamfe, and have found that everything is as it should be. Those that we found wanting, we have prayed about it and hope that God will take care of it for us. At this juncture, we will begin to call upon all the families that established the Mamfe Township. When your name is called, please bring your pot of palm wine to be put in the big pot in the center.

At the end of the Ritual Rev. Daniel Nyante was asked to give the closing prayer.

These thoughts were expressed during the debriefing session after the Peace Ritual:

The essence of this ritual as I understood it is a healing process for the township. I hope it could be replicated in this country to heal it of all political and ethnic polarization. All heads of families, sub-chiefs, elders and individuals are supposed to settle all disputes and misunderstandings pertaining to anything at all and then contribute drinks as a sign of goodwill into one common pot for all to drink. This is good. The Asafosa ensures that the New Year begins with a clean slate. Where all wrongs have been made right and the townships forges ahead in unity and togetherness. This show of progress, oneness does not leave visitors and guests out. It is all embracing. A system of peacemaking ritual where perceived enemies of progress are prayed for not cursed. Ghana as a country needs to (have) a replica of this ritual.

Being a part of the Peace Ritual was very real for me. It was very interesting to actually see what I had been told about in person. Just as I had been told, I witnessed the whole township coming together to make sure that peace exists in their community.

They made sure they start their new year with a clean slate and that was very important.

It was not an individualistic ritual; it was for the whole community. It would be a gift if this ritual would have a domino effect because of the meaning behind this ritual.

It was also surprising to find out that this ritual had been celebrated way before the missionaries set foot on the Gold Coast soil. It is making sense to me - this is part of Onyamesom; peace togetherness, unity, is so different about this? Isn't this the same message that Kristosom preaches? I am very happy I was able to witness this ritual and it was also important for me that the ritual ended with a prayer. Again, it is a shame that the missionaries did not take the time to really learn about our rituals, they would have appreciated our culture and respected us better.

The Asafosa Peace Ritual/Festival and The Holy Communion

Although I knew about the festival of the Mamfe Township, it was during the last workshop that the chief of Mamfe presented the Asafosa Ritual, which is part of a yearly festival *Ohum*, celebrated by the community in January, as an example of an African tradition which is not understood by Christians. The Chief went on to explain that the ritual, which is part of the *Ohum* festival, occurs at the early part of the festival, and it functions to promote peace in the community. The Asafosa Ritual for Peace in the Mamfe Township predates the introduction of Christianity.

The people of Mamfe realized that they needed guidance in their community, and so they sought the protection of an intercessor spirit to help them achieve tranquility throughout the year. This yearly ritual is part of the festival which starts in the second week of January and lasts about four days, during which people from the community travel from far and wide to celebrate. The actual festival celebration always begins on a

Thursday, and culminates with the Asafosa Ritual on Sunday²⁰¹. The ritual follows this pattern:

A large community pot is set in front of the chief's palace. Starting on Thursday, the heads of all the family clans of Mamfe bring pots of "palm wine", a local drink tapped from the palm tree, and pour the wine into the community pot. However, if there is a feud within any clan/family, that dispute/feud must be settled before participating in the Asafosa Ritual. If the feud is not settled, those individuals will not be allowed to participate in the Ritual.²⁰²

Upon hearing the details, I was amazed because I realized it sounded just like something Jesus said in Matthew 5: 23-24:

So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go first be reconciled to your brother and sister, and then come and offer your gift.....

What other rituals and sacraments are there in the Bible that parallel African rituals? I chose to concentrate on the Christian Holy Communion because of its symbolism.

Christian Holy Communion

Christian Holy Communion (CHC)/Eucharist

The Church receives the Eucharist as a gift from the Lord. St. Paul wrote: "I have received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said:

²⁰¹ As told by the Mamfe Chief and his elders at Mamfe in an interview during my research process, April, 2008.

²⁰² Ibid.

‘This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance (*anamnesis*) of me.’” In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying: ‘This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’” (1 Corinthians 11:23-25; Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22: 14-20).

The meals which Jesus is recorded as sharing during his earthly ministry proclaim the nearness of the Kingdom, of which the feeding of the multitude is a sign. In his last meal, the fellowship of the Kingdom was connected with the imminence of Jesus’ suffering. After his Resurrection, the Lord made his presence known to his disciples through the breaking of bread. Thus, the Eucharist continues these meals of Jesus during his earthly life and after his Resurrection, as a sign of the Kingdom.

The Eucharist is essentially the sacrament of the gift which God makes to us in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Every Christian receives this gift of salvation, through Communion in the body and blood of Christ. In the Eucharist meal, in the eating and drinking of the bread and wine, Christ grants Communion with Himself. God himself acts, giving life to the body of Christ, and renewing each member. In accordance with Christ’s promise, each baptized member of the body of Christ receives in the Eucharist the assurance of the forgiveness of sins (Matt 26:28) and the pledge of Eternal Life (John 6:51-58). Although the Eucharist is essentially one complete act, it will be considered here under the following aspects: giving thanks to the Father, memorial of Christ, invocation of the Spirit, communion of the faithful, meal of the Kingdom.

Communion

Jesus Christ said, “This do in remembrance of me.” (attribution). We regularly celebrate Communion with these words ringing in our ears. Communion is more than a memorial and our continued participation in this powerfully symbolic ceremony, which molds our thinking, gives life to deeply spiritual truths in very concrete ways.

Communion shapes our identity as a people of God, and provides the blessed assurance that we have been redeemed by the blood of the lamb. Believers should share Communion, because it is through Communion that our sins are forgiven. Believers often abstain, probably due to Paul’s warning in 1 Corinthians 11:27-29.:

So if anyone eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily, that person is guilty of sinning against the body and the blood of the Lord. That is why you should examine yourself before eating the bread and drinking from the cup. For if you eat the bread or drink the cup unworthily, not honoring the body of Christ, you are eating and drinking God’s judgment upon yourself.

And when Jesus stated in John 6:53-54:

I assure you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his Blood, You cannot have eternal life within you. But those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life and I will raise them at the last day.

Jesus’ blood cleanses us from sin, and we need him most when we are guilty of a sin. Communion is a body matter, since we commune as a body and come to the Lord’s Table as a family. 1 Corinthians 10:17 states: “*And we all eat from one loaf, showing that we are one body.*”

Another key ingredient of Communion was the shared meal, in which the loaf and the cup were shared. The Lord’s Supper was made up of both potluck dishes and emblems, as in 1 Corinthians 20:22, 33, when this meal was the focal point of the church’s weekly experience. (Acts 20:7): “*On the first day of the week, we gathered to*

observe the Lord's Supper.” The early church communed every single week, and at these meetings they shared Communion - Acts 2:46:

They worshipped together at the Temple each day, met in their homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity.”

The first Christians broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, so Communion should be celebrated in a joyful way. Taking Communion is about relationships and resolving conflicts. Drink deeply of the cup of forgiveness, and thank God that Christ is coming soon to usher us into the banquet hall where we shall celebrate with all the saints in the body.²⁰³ In 1 Corinthians, Paul explains the meaning of the Lord's Supper and how we as Christians are to celebrate this important church ordinance. Christians have been celebrating Communion in one form or the other for the past two thousand years, ever since Christ shared the last supper with his disciples, so when we celebrate Communion, we are joining believers from centuries past in communion with our Lord and Savior. 1 Corinthians 11:23- 24

For this is what the Lord himself said, and I pass it on to you just as I received it. On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took a loaf of bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way, he took the cup of wine after supper saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant between God and you, sealed by the shedding of my blood. Do this in remembrance of me as often as you drink it.

There are two important teachings in the verse:

- 1) The bread represents Christ's body, broken for us, and
- 2) We take the Communion bread to remember Christ.

His body was presented as the ultimate sacrifice for our sins. Communion is a time for confessing our sins and receiving Christ's forgiveness. We should not take a

²⁰³True Grace Ministries, “The Meaning of Communion,” <http://www.auburn.edu/> The Meaning of Communion (accessed September, 15, 2009).

cavalier approach to Communion. It is a time for reflection. So every time we partake of Holy Communion, we should think about the sacrifice Jesus made for us.

What is Holy Communion? Holy Communion, also referred to as the Eucharist, is a sacrament.²⁰⁴ The Eucharist commemorates the meals of Jesus during his earthly life and after his resurrection, as a sign of the Kingdom. What does Holy Communion/Eucharist mean? The Eucharist according to the World Council of Churches is essentially the sacrament of the gift which God makes to us in Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Peace exists in the lifetime of everyone. You do not share a meal with your enemy; when you break bread with your enemy, it means you are both ready to make peace.²⁰⁵

In reconciliation, if you do not forget yesterday's quarrels, you may not have anyone to play with tomorrow²⁰⁶. You have to move on in order to free yourself to achieve the internal freedom that brings happiness when you are free from all burdens. There is an Akan (African) practice in which, when your neighbor visits you, the first thing you do before welcoming him is to give him a glass of water. Water signifies peace, and with peace, there is a way to realize truth. "Truth is like a baobab tree", it leads to openness and avoidance of conflicts²⁰⁷.

In matters of truth, no single religion exhausts all there is to know about God, and when we claim absolute truth as our possession and despise others then we discredit God.

²⁰⁴ World Council of Churches "What is Holy Communion – Eucharist," <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/faith-and-order-com> (October 21, 2009).

²⁰⁵ Conversations with Professor Kofi Asare Opoku.

²⁰⁶ A Yoruba proverb.

²⁰⁷ Conversations with Professor Kofi Asare Opoku.

When we recognize that others also have the truth, we are ready to build bridges and not walls.²⁰⁸ Passover was meaningful to the Jews during the time of Jesus Christ, just as the Asafosa Ritual still has meaning to the people of Mamfe in their relationship with God.

As part of being a Christian, the Holy Communion has been a celebration for me after I was confirmed and so I have been celebrating the Holy Communion for sometime. It has always been an individual celebration within the church community. Even after the communion prayers are said, it is the individual who partakes of the Holy Communion and whatever is said is between the individual and God. There is a lack of openness in the Holy Communion. It struck me that the clergy who administer the sacraments hold themselves separate from the congregation. The clergy are separated from the congregation by drinking from the chalice and having the elders of the church administer the sacraments to the congregation.

I do not see that as being in a community; even though the church congregation is a community, they need to realize that there are other people in the community who may not be Christians and so are not partakers of the Holy Communion. They are the ones who are left out. This point became so obvious to me that whereas the Peace Ritual was held outside on grounds open and accessible to all members of the community, the Holy Communion was for those who had gone through sanctification, having been baptized and gone through confirmation to be able to participate in the Holy Communion. Christians can only celebrate communion in the church and unless the church member is on a sickbed, the clergy will not take communion to the member at home.

²⁰⁸ Conversations with Professor Kofi Asare Opoku.

Asafosa is held in the open, inviting everybody; Christian Holy Communion in a sanctuary, excluding those on the outside. So where is the community spirit in the Christian Holy Communion? Where is the peace, togetherness and the unity the community needs? I believe that communion should be open and shared. There should be more of a community celebration and should not be us against them. If it is for peace, unity and togetherness within the community, then openness should be a serious consideration.

Parallels between Asafosa Peace Ritual (APR) and Christian Holy Communion (CHC)

Peace Ritual, Community based: - The APR is celebrated by the whole township which is made up of different communities. When the communities meet, they bring all their issues to be discussed, such as deaths that have occurred, or any other problems encountered during the year. They also talk about happy issues such as births and marriages, and together, they drink from one pot signifying that they are all one community, living together for the good of the town.

Holy Communion, Community based: - The Christian Holy Communion is celebrated every Sunday by some disciples, and every month by others in various churches. It is also community-based, where the congregation comes together to celebrate the issues of the week. Other issues including deaths and births are also discussed within the church community at that time, the same as in APR.

Peace Ritual, Palm Wine -: - Palm wine is the drink used in the Peace Ritual. Palm wine, also called Palm Toddy or simply Toddy, is an alcoholic beverage created from the sap of various species of trees such as Palmyra Palm, Coconut tree, etc. This drink is particularly common in various parts of Asia and Africa, and goes by different

names, such as *Legmi* in Africa. Guests at weddings, birth celebrations, and funeral wakes are served generous amounts. As a token of respect to deceased ancestors, many drinking sessions begin with a small amount of palm wine spilled on the ground ("*Kulosa malafu*" in *Kikongo ya Leta*). Palm wine is enjoyed by men and women, although women usually drink it in less public venues.

Holy Communion, Wine - According to Richard Fuller, "No sphere of American cultural life has displayed more diversity, innovation and passion than religion. There are over 2000 different religious groups in the United States, probably due to historic pluralism and the absence of any governmentally established religion, and the relative mobility of the population has made it possible for new and experimental forms of religion to develop and expand with astonishing rapidity."²⁰⁹

From a religious or theological perspective, Protestant, Catholic and Jewish forms of worship, doctrine, and moral codes can be seen as variations of a shared and fairly cohesive tradition. All are steeped in an ancient heritage that associates wine with the worship of God, and with rituals designed to cultivate communal affirmation. The sacred texts of ancient Judaism make clear that wine is a sign of God's blessing and that humans are to enjoy the "gladdening of the heart" that wine provides (Genesis 27:28, Deuteronomy 7:13, Amos 9:24, 2 Samuel 13:28, Esther 1:10, Ecclesiastes 9:7 and 10:19). Wine was used by Israelite priests to consecrate the altar when making sacrifices to God. Wine has been used to foster a sense of community affiliation at the family's Sabbath meal, the Seder meal during Passover, the celebration of a Bris, and at weddings.²¹⁰

²⁰⁹ Robert C. Fuller, "Wine, Symbolic Boundary Setting, and American Religious Communities," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64 (December 1995): 497.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

Christians believe that Jesus celebrated his last meal, a Seder dinner that is intimately connected with the ritual use of wine, with his closest disciples on the night before he died. In 1 Corinthians, Paul explains that during the Last Supper, Jesus took a cup of wine and pronounced that “This cup is the new covenant in my blood.” He then commanded his followers to “Do this in remembrance of me.” Christians continue to break bread and drink wine to keep alive the memory of the death and resurrection of Jesus, and to anticipate the arrival of a new Messianic Age. Even more than baptism, this ceremony was distinctive to the emergent Christian religion, and hence critical to the construction of the earliest boundaries separating Christianity from Judaism.²¹¹

Wine has been placed above all other beverages as the substance that most symbolizes the intersection of the secular and sacred. Wine has been the focus of the theological and liturgical changes through which Christianity exhibited a difference from Judaism.

Wine has helped create the kinds of communal affiliations required by new and experimental forms of spirituality. The mental changes induced by drinking wine favor the kind of variation in ideas that is often necessary to embolden individuals to strike out in theological directions that veer away from the established churches. Wine also promotes the formation of novel religious groups by imparting a sense of emotional expansiveness.²¹² The distinctive patterns of use and non-use of wine by a wide variety of religious groups provide an additional perspective on the continuing creativity of

²¹¹ Fuller, *Wine, Symbolic Boundary Setting*: 499.

²¹² Ibid. 515.

American culture and the identity creation and boundary setting of American religious communities.²¹³

Peace Ritual: The people of the Mamfe Township believe that before anyone in their community attends the APR, **ALL** issues that are antagonistic in nature, must be settled before drinking palm wine mixed from the communal pot. Members of the community who do not settle their differences, cannot partake of this ritual/drink for that period. When you decide to participate, you agree that all issues you have against anyone are wiped out completely, never to be revisited or discussed again. You come to this Peace Ritual with a clean heart and mind.

The main requirement of the Peace Ritual –compared to the Biblical text of Matthew 5: 23- 25 which is as follows:

So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on your way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge and the judge to the guard and you will be thrown into prison.

Jesus broke bread with his betrayer Judas, and Jesus forgave Judas for what he was to do. Thus the Christian Holy Communion is also seen as a peace ritual. You must not partake of Christian Holy Communion with an unclean heart.

The APR is celebrated once a year, during a huge festival where all the townspeople who live elsewhere will congregate in the town of Mamfe for a celebration. All the families get together and meet as a community for this celebration. The celebration lasts a week with a function everyday of the week, beginning on Monday.

²¹³ Fuller, *Wine, Symbolic Boundary Setting*: 514.

As often as you can participate – CHC - Episcopalians celebrate communion every Sunday with bread and wine. Catholics celebrate communion every Sunday, but without wine. Other Christian disciplines celebrate communion at the beginning of every month, and some celebrate without the wine, using non-alcoholic drinks instead. The church community celebrates communion together. Some church communities, valuing communal feeling, built their churches in the circular mode in order to affect a round table where congregants can face each other in their communion celebrations. These churches feel that when they celebrate communion in the round, they celebrate together, with no one being more special than another, which bring about togetherness and more of unity, sharing together with each other observing everything.

Nea wahunu bi pen se ‘wɔkyirɛ’ – Ghanaian Proverb

Experience teaches best

Imagine the impact this would have if the church would open its doors to the community? The domino effect this Peace Ritual would have on the community would be phenomenal. What will happen if the church accepts this, humility, peace togetherness in society? Sometimes I feel as if the Ghanaian clergy needs to open up some more. Society puts clergy on a pedestal sometimes forgetting that they are human. Clergy should be the ones showing the humility, peace and togetherness by being open to society. People would feel more secure because they know they will be able to go to the church and be accepted for who and what they are. Sometimes the church becomes discriminatory within society and that needs to change. Just like the proverb, experience is the best teacher. When you have experienced something, you are able to talk about it from your point of view and in this case my views on the Peace Ritual are that it would be a good ritual for the church to adopt.

A visit to the Akonedi Shrine in Larteh.

The visit to the Akonedi Shrine at Larteh occurred on December 23, 2009. We arrived at the shrine at about 12 noon and were given seats. The priest and priestess sat across from our location. The team arrived to see the end of a conflict resolution between two women. Prior to our visit, we had to make a donation with two bottles of schnapps, to reserve the day of the visit to the shrine; which Prof. Opoku presented. On the day of the visit, we were asked to give two more bottles of schnapps prior to being welcomed.

Mr. Darko, the secretary and Okyeame of the Shrine welcomed us with a calabash of water. The videographer was told to stop recording until he was told to do so, otherwise his recording will come out empty. The calabash, which had been used to welcome us, had been taken from the wall and after it had been passed around to everyone, it was put back on the wall. We were again formally welcomed with “*Akwaaba*” and we were asked about our mission – why we had come to the shrine. Prof. Opoku, who was our leader, explained that we are there in order to learn what goes on in the shrine. We were all asked to take off our shoes and sandals and walk barefoot by the *Okyeame*. There were proverbs on the walls of the shrine which were biblical e.g.:

Onipa hwe nea etua aniwa na nana de ohwe koma mu. Man looks at what is in the eye but Nana (the Akonedi Divinity) looks at what is in the heart.

Di Nokware kosi wo nkwa nda nyinaa Be truthful all through your earthly life

There were three flags belonging to Akonedi. There was a sign with two people dragging a pot with the inscription *Nokware fi ni (This is the house of Truth)* and there was another sign which said “Two heads are better than one.” Yet another inscription said “*You can never break the intelligence of Nana*”. When the floor was opened for dancing, most team members danced and it was quite interesting to see how that broke

the initial tension that existed and was quite palpable. After dancing they would again bow to the priest and priestess and then to the drummers. We were told that Nana expects us to give an offering because that is what Nana uses to maintain the shrine. A calabash was set in place and each member of the team was to dance and place their offering into the calabash in the middle of the floor. See Appendix 11 for video and write-up.

After that the team went to see the priestess in her separate quarters at the shrine. She was sitting in state her chair was sitting in the middle of white drawings on the floor. The spirit comes to where the priestess is and that is when the priestess becomes possessed. The priestess offered us a bottle of Campari, and it was opened and poured for the priestess to pour libation. She poured it to Onyankopong, God first, the shrine etc. The priestess in training was asked to kneel. After the Nsaguo the drink was given to all the guests to have a taste.

Professor Opoku thanked the priestess and asked permission to leave. We were led out through another door different from the one through which we had entered with the secretary/Okyeame. The *Okyeame* then spoke to me privately and said that if I wanted to come and see the priestess, it was okay. He also said that most people are afraid and do not want anybody to see them coming to visit the shrine, so he gave me a private number to call. He said that many priests visit the shrine to seek protection for themselves. These are some thoughts about the trip to the shrine:

Virtues, humility and good righteous lives generally. There is all indication that it is going to be as old as ever been because younger people both male and female are being given stations to men as priests and priestesses. They are believers in a supreme reality; both communicate through spirits. I noticed this trainee priestess who functions just like young boys who serve at mass services in the Catholic Church.

The debriefing occurred at the farm of Professor Opoku, and all the members of the team agreed that what they had heard about the shrine was nothing like the real thing that they experienced. Wanda felt that the shrine reminded her of the Old Testament. After that day, everything she experienced has been explained in terms of either the Old Testament or the New Testament. The shrine is a place of conflict resolution for the society.

Experience teaches best is the proverb that best describes what happened to me with the visit at the shrine. As stated earlier, I had my reservations about going to the shrine because of what I had been told by some local priests about Akonedi. A lot of what they told me was something they had heard and I am not sure that they had actually seen what happens at the shrine because if one is seen going to the shrine, there will be a stigma attached to the person. Here, the fact that I had a team, won the day in that three of my team members insisted that the visit to the shrine occur and I am very happy that happened because I am now aware of what the shrine does.

The spirit of humility was noticeable all throughout. Visitors are asked to remove their shoes and prior to dancing, they kneel and touch the ground with their fingers to ask permission from the Nana and his elders; they also recognize the drummers by also touching the ground, and when they finish dancing they also signal the drummer. These signals and gestures are the same as those who danced at the Mamfe Peace Ritual. This is an act of humility.

Before the mission of visitors is asked, water is the first thing they give to the visitors to welcome them. This act is reminiscent to what Abraham did to his visitors in the Old Testament. Visitors' removal of sandals and kneeling during prayers also to me

indicate that they are from an authority just like Christianity. As Christians and Muslims worship God on Sundays and Fridays respectively, the Akonedi Shrine worship God on Tuesdays and Fridays; we went to the shrine on a Tuesday, the priest and the priestess were in white calico cloth; all of the other priestess wore white cloth on their heads.

The shrine serves the community and this is why we walked in on arbitration between two women. There is nothing deceptive about what they do, and there seems to be communal discipline. They also serve as part of the leadership in the community; the community is aware that should they go to Akonedi with a problem, it will be solved. It is almost like being watched, but with serious consequences if trust/truth is violated. This brings the community to respect each other.

The spirit of the Akonedi divinity possesses individuals in the community and supposedly the choice is from the divinity. The research about the shrine showed that the spirit is not about negativity but about truth and justice and they do positive things, the positive which comes from God so it must be good. I believe that all spirit is from God and God has also given us the freedom of choice, we can either wish the spirit to do evil things for us because of our selfishness or we can wish the spirit to do if it does what is important to us. Because we influence the spirit in our negative way, they can act negatively for us and that can create vices like wanting to steal, lie cheat, kill etc. God is the creator of the universe, everything belongs to Him, if we believe in Him, we can have power cause power comes from Him; Akonedi shrine believes in God and that the divinity Akonedi claims it is spirituality is from God and so what the shrine practices in African Traditional Religion, is similar to what Jesus is to the Christians and that the

priest and priestesses similar to the clergy in Christianity and the Imams for the Muslims. Nana was a Presbyterian catechist before the Akonedi Divinity called him to be a priest.

The Shrine is purposely there to help humankind by settling disputes, provide children for childless women and when one feels cheated, he or she can seek justice from the Shrine. Their prayer and thanksgiving is pouring libation which is also a way of getting closer or building relationships with God.

Lecture workshop on Onyamesom

We conducted a workshop with Professor Opoku with team members present after the funeral, which lasted for about 2 hours and several issues were addressed. According to Professor Opoku, One has to realize that knowledge is not just in one person's head, thus one has to get ready to learn about other religions, to know and to tolerate them, rather than to think one's religion is superior to others.

Such proverbs encourage accommodation, tolerance, respect, openness to other religions and discourage exclusion from other religions such as the Islamic religion or Christianity. This means that one religion cannot claim to have sole truth or knowledge of the truth. Truth can be found in all religions, if only one is ready to invest time and effort to study it. The source of scripture or knowledge can make religion authoritative, not just the fact that it is written. There are many ways of preserving experience and knowledge. Some preserve experiences by writing them down. Others, like African Traditional Religion, preserve them in symbols and songs, drumming, dancing, and proverbs. So the mere fact that some experiences are not written does not mean they are not legitimate.

Africans have something valuable to add to other cultures, because Africans have contributed a lot to society that has helped shape Christianity and Islam. The missionaries

arrived with the idea that our culture is dirty. By opening up to their surroundings some Africans have realized the rich cultures, which surrounds them and that to search around, one is able to carry forward through with life and start to tell stories from their own societies that can express how God has been in their midst. . Professor Opoku gave a lot of myths and proverbs. For instance, he touched on Africans' belief in death and resurrection.

It is quite interesting to know that the workshop on Onyamesom brought some deep thoughts that made me realize the truth in what Mbiti said: Religion is at the root of African Culture. The Africans treasure religion, and anything that threatens their religion threatens their whole existence. The average person believes that every aspect of social, emotional, economic, intellectual and spiritual life is a guide by the Supreme God Onyame. Therefore there is nothing wrong in using any form of God's creation in worship. The rivers, the mountains, the Earth, the trees all have spirits which aids in the understanding of what God is doing and what he is doing for the society.

It is obvious that religion has given African people a way of understanding the world around them. This gives them a way of understanding their own existence in their emotional, cultural and intellectual environment. Over the years, religion has guided people in their day to day life and has acted as a light for seeing beyond themselves. There are so many questions that the human beings struggle with and it is only when we bring our religion into our daily lives that we are able to find some of the answers. Religion sometimes tries to solve some of the serious questions that plague society and without that we are ignorant and certainly at a loss.

Infact, the workshop showed me that the society has morals and do have the understanding of what is wrong, good and evil, what is just and unjust. The African society has moral values within the family and community. According to John Mbiti, no society can exist without morals because it's through religion that the morals of people are enriched which becomes beneficial to the welfare of people in the society. With true religion, the physical and spiritual welfare of humanity is enriched.

Libation which seems to be an issue in Christian circles was explained as a congregational prayer and to pray for the good of society/community is not a bad thing. The contacts between people and community in aspects of the Rituals, Festivals feed the spiritual hunger of the people and create a link between them and the spirit world.

People meet together to pray, to perform rituals and to sacrifice together as a community with one purpose. Because of religion, they are able to understand one another, communicate ideas and feelings and to act more or less as a social unit, even if there may be other differences.

CHAPTER 5

GOAL THREE – WE FOUND GOLD

Obi mfi akwantu mu mma n'anom nsem nsa - Ghanaian Proverb
(None returns from traveling and then has nothing to say)

Theology can be likened to a baobab tree – it is too wide for one's arms to wrap around. This is especially true when we examine theology from the African perspective: It is so encompassing, and there is so much to learn and understand that it is important we study theology from this perspective, to ensure the African point-of-view is heard and understood.

The Institute

The Institute for Diasporan and African Culture comes from an awareness, an awakening of sorts, to learn, understand and teach others about African Tradition, Culture and Christianity. Our mission is to facilitate learning through workshops, seminars and lectures given by scholars, teachers and writers of the African Diaspora, and to produce an interactive website and quarterly journal where such information will be published and shared. Our vision is to help others gain an appreciation for African culture and Christianity, to enhance the faith of all those who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is a need for Africans in Africa and the Diaspora to become aware of their surroundings; to gain appreciation for their tradition and culture, and to understand how it enhances their faith. One of the ways the community can be made aware of this is

through education, hence the Institute for Diasporan and African Culture, where students can further their theological education with an emphasis on Diasporan Studies and African Tradition and Religion.

Housed in an academic setting, with an interactive website giving the public access to information and a quarterly magazine/journal where information and new ideas will be published, the Institute will facilitate three (3) programs:

- a) Doctor of Ministry in Diasporan Studies; African Tradition and Religion
- b) Master of Divinity in African Tradition and Religion
- c) Certificate in Christian Ministry with vocations in three sectors:
Agriculture, Farming, Home Economics, Sewing, Catering, Arts and Crafts
Construction, Brick-Laying, Carpentry, Masonry

The Doctor of Ministry Program will be a three-year program. The first academic year will be spent in Ghana; the second year will take place in the United States at the New York Theological Seminary; and, the final year will be completed in Ghana.

The Certificate Program in Christian Ministry provides an introduction to theological disciplines for laity, as well as ordained or lay ministers, and others involved or interested in ministry. The two-year course is divided into four semesters with attendance required at one overnight retreat each semester.

The Institute will be open to all denominations with all classes taught in English. Prospective students will submit to the Institute an application for admission similar to the New York Theological Seminary application and, after an intensive interview, students will be selected.

In collaboration with the New York Theological Seminary, the faculty will consist of theologians Professor Kofi Asare Opoku, Professor Mercy Oduyoye, Dr. Elizabeth

Amoah, Professor Addo-Fening, Dr. Reverend Felix Busby and other NYTS alumna to be named later.

The Institute campus, where students will be housed, will be located at Akropong, Ghana as well as in the United States.

All students must take two (2) courses in African Religion and African Culture and complete all the core courses and electives. All core courses will be taken through the Institute and the New York Theological Seminary. The electives can be taken in any accredited institution. The Institute, along with NYTS, will seek funding to provide scholarships for students from Africa and the Diaspora to enroll in the program. Again, applicants will undergo very careful screening prior to awarding of the scholarships. The Institute, with its offices in New York and Akropong, Ghana, will be run by the Executive Director and his staff. The Institute is registered in New York as a non-profit organization, and at a meeting of the Board Members, on March 19, 2009 elected to have an Advisory Board in lieu of a Board of Directors to run the Institute.

Prof. Opoku said he has been to Prof. Lomax's church in Atlanta where libation pouring is practiced and what he told the congregation was that he was bringing them greetings from Africa and the ancestors but after seeing how they worship at their location, he was taking their greetings to Africa. Their confidence was simply overwhelming. Some of us have been bred to have elements of fear in us so we cannot to see this church so liberated. The people in the Congo say: "The person who is in touch with his or her origins is a person who will never die". Before the hybrid could be recognized we need to be friendly and still have the confidence to participate – I have been greatly encouraged by this workshop; and would like to keep your interest and be a

part of this interesting and exciting part of this movement. This Institute cannot go any further without your participation. Thank you.

Dr. Dale Irvin

There needs to be institution building and to add to the conversation that was going on about the work of the Institute. Much of the work will be in partnership and will take place in New York with NYTS one of the 1st roles is simply educational in nature. I will tell a story of my own in 1986 I was teaching in the college of New Rochelle, a fabulous woman Sis. Rosina Ampah now a priest at St. Phillip's Episcopal Church down in Atlanta – she was a member of the Sister of St. Helena's was planting convents across Ghana and a spiritual and traditional healer I asked her to come to my class in World Religions.

Prof Mercy – vote of thanks:

We created a holy space here for the spirit of God, the spirit of our ancestors, the spirit of ecumenical movement, interchurch relations to come in and stimulate our discussion. In this holy place, we have stood and spoken and listened and we have heard the voice and voices of God and our ancestors asking us where is your sister, where is your brother, are you going to get together from the Diaspora and be a people, here in this holy place, we have talked and conversed and debated, we have puzzled over a lot of things and as we prepare to go and have what I know to be a beautiful meal because I was one of the ones who tasted ahead of it; I want to say go in the strength and the love and concern that has brought us together:

Go in the spirit that has bound us together till now and will continue to bind us together, when we go, God will go with us everywhere and in every place. We were

called to this holy place by the dreams and visions of our brother Dan but now we discover that it is our dreams, our vision and we want to make them a reality. A lot has been unveiled to us; there is a lot more to unveil. We have been called on a journey as the Bishops want to say, once called, you remain called – you remain a bishop forever so we have been called we remain called. So with us we might thank you I am also doing a commission: “Go in the strength of the community that we have created today and let us all put our hands on TIDAC and make it a work that God has put into our hands to build a community of God’s peoples”. Amen

Programs by the Institute

As we strive to become better Christians by exploring our African culture, we should be open to what we find and keep a clear and open mind about what we see. All things are not what they seem and as the commissioning statement goes, it is only when we keep an open mind free of prejudices that the Spirit will be able to work through us. One of the problems in Africa is that the missionaries did not relate Christianity to the African Traditional Religion. They did not know enough about African culture but they did not take the time to find out. They did not understand the ways Africans worship; but were not interested in trying to understand the people they had gone after to convert. They made it seem that in order to be Christians you must throw away what it means to be African and that is what happened.

The Institute and what it stands for has been described by the President of the New York Theological Institute as follows: Programs are conducted in various locations throughout the world, including at NYTS, but are centered in Ghana Many of those who are involved in the program are part of the highly mobile African Diaspora, and serve in

ministry in both North America and West Africa. A number of TIDAC's founding faculty, such as Professor Kofi Asare Opoku and Professor Mercy Amba Oduyoye, reside in Ghana but regularly visit other regions of the world for professional (delivering academic lectures at European universities) reasons.

When we open our hearts and soul to the Supreme Being and ask for all the things that are necessary for us, we will find out for ourselves those things that are necessary. It says the truth will make us free, so in coming together to find things for ourselves we find truthfulness which will obviously make us free.

The Prayer and Healing Service at Bethel Presbyterian Reformed Church in Brooklyn – Saturday March 21, 2009

The healing service started at about 4 pm at the Bethel Presbyterian Reformed Church. The Bethel Choir started with praise and worship for about 20 minutes. The service started with about 100 church members, mostly Bethel congregation and other denominations from Canarsie Reformed Church, Church on the Edge, Elmont and Manhattan Presbyterian Church including about 10 clergy of various denominations.

The congregation sang for a while and Rev. Atiemo announced that the offering that afternoon was for TIDAC. So all the offering collected was given to TIDAC which amounted to about \$450.00. Rev. Nyante prayed for the offering and Ms. Eva Shaw-Taylor thanked all for coming and asked each and everyone to pick a present on their way out. The service came to an end at about 7.00 pm.

Numerous times I had witnessed a Healing Service at my church and never really took it seriously until recently when I had time to participate and observe what goes on. That made me appreciate the idea of a healing service. The participation was always good and so I felt in getting people to attend the inauguration of the Institute, adding a healing service would bring more people to the program and it actually did.

According to the Pastoral care of Grace Deliverance Team of the Grace Presbyterian Church in Akropong, Ghana; deliverance is necessary to cast out demons to set people and demonized objects and places free from different bondages in the name of Jesus Christ. In Church Leaders Training Manual for Building the Capacity for Pastoral Care by Catechist Abboah-Offei, S. Y. Kwami is quoted as having translated deliverance from the Greek word “aphesis” as the same word which is translated as forgiveness or a release from the captivating power and effects of sin. He supports his definition with

Matthew 26:2, Luke 24:47, and Acts 13:18. A.O. Atiemo, who has done more scholarly work on deliverance, defines it as a phenomenon, which has the general idea of freeing people from the bondage of Satan. According to him, deliverance is an odd term in Christian hermeneutics, which traditionally is used to express the same idea like salvation, redemption, liberation and release; have been applied to the term deliverance was originally used to refer to the new status of freedom which God has achieved for human kind through Jesus Christ.²¹⁴ A lot is happening within the societies/communities that its through coming together in pastoral care the communities can experience the relief that comes only through the power of the Holy Spirit.

People are being healed from problems that come from various reasons and as Catechist Abboah-Offei emphasized, it is only when one has surrenders the full self to God the Father that the Spirit can do its work in the healing process. If we are made (human) in the image of God, then in our divine nature, we have perfect health and wholeness Jesus demonstrated through His own consciousness and was able to heal others by realizing their wholeness for them.

The prayer is that we who believe can demonstrate the wholeness of God in all that we are and in all that we do. Jesus says through out the Gospels of the Bible, that by our Faith we can be whole. The prayer with Faith has the ability to heal ourselves through Jesus consciousness. Jesus thought us that not only could we take up our mats and walk, but that we could do even greater things than Him.

²¹⁴ Ebenezer A. Abboah-Offei, *Church Leaders Training Manual: For Building the Capacity for Pastoral Care*, (Akropong-Akuapem), 7.

Thanksgiving and Prayer Service at Canarsie Reformed Church on Sunday March 22, 2009.

The church service started at about 10:30 am. There were congregations from Bethel Presbyterian Reformed Church as well for a total of about 200 people worshipping the one and only God; who is the maker of human and earth. There were two parts to the service. The first part was the regular Canarsie Church Service and the second part was the Thanksgiving Service for TIDAC. (See appendix for church program).

According to Professor Opoku, when the tongue is present, the teeth do not talk. A person's mouth can free them but the same mouth can also condemn them. We are guided by what we say. Africa is home to all human beings. Africa is "our home". It takes one person to kill an elephant but the whole community eats the meat. In this way Rev. Nyante is the hunter and we will all benefit from his vision to open TIDAC. Rev. Nyante saw the need for a place of study about African culture in Africa and the Americas. He also envisioned a place where we can study our traditional culture as well as our more recently acquired Christian heritage. Unfortunately many Africans know more about their Christian heritage than their African heritage. We have such a great heritage that we have little knowledge about.

There are so many ideas that are not bearing fruit. Through TIDAC we can all share our ideas and cultures through openness. We can come together without preconceived notions to learn together. Africans have a rich tradition of passing down stories through the years. "When a person dies, their tongue does not rot." The story of the baobab tree or the "upside down tree" as some people call it has been passed down since creation. In the story the Creator gives each animal a seedling and tells them to go out and plant them. The hyena was given the seedling for the baobab tree. Because we all

know hyenas are very clumsy in nature he planted the seedling upside down. This is why the baobab tree looks as if it was planted upside down.

TIDAC calls for people to join together; not just people of the Diaspora or Christians, but all people. Some churches in Africa exclude tribal leaders as pagans or fetishists but TIDAC will give us the opportunity to explore this rich part of our heritage without scrutiny or judgment. The service ended with a reception at the hall of the Canarsie Church. The service was rich with the knowledge it imparted to the congregation and the following wisdom from Professor Mercy adds to the message of Professor Opoku with her preaching. Nana Offei Kwasi Agyeman stated that he is present to represent the traditional aspect of Ghanaian culture. His ancestors sent him to this inauguration so he could present their side of the story. He also wanted to state that a lot of chiefs/traditional leaders are Christians and are also proud of their culture.

Professor Mercy Oduyoye's message was as follows: I am sure there is something up there in the hands of God; so I must be open to receive it. If we sow the seeds of justice, expect to harvest peace. We must let the good in Heaven reach our hearts.

Initially when I suggested the Thanksgiving service as part of the inaugural activities, the concern was that we have spent too much money so we need to scale back. But I felt that to have been blessed to get to the point where we are, we definitely needed to be thankful to God for I had no idea when I started the demonstration project and the research that this was where I would end up. There was initial confusion in class because others thought I was introducing a new concept of religion. In trying to explain some aspects of the African Traditional religion, others thought that was impossible. So I

really felt blessed to have been able to get as much information through the research to ground me in my understanding.

The Slave Trade & African Americans

The slave trade took people from different parts of the West Coast mainly because that area was more accessible to the missionaries, and so those who were let go when they got to for example Elmina Castle, could not go back to their original homes because they did not know how to get back. Colonization was able to divide even Africans to the point where black people do not seem to want to relate with Africans. When they have made efforts to connect with Africans or the Diaspora, there is nothing new for them because they cannot even understand how Africans live in their own motherland and are still treated like foreigners. The poverty and the irresponsibility of African leaders leaves much to be desired.

Currently, most Africans are not in tune with their culture in terms of their identity. Some of the perceived notions about Africa by the missionaries are still haunting them, because they have not seriously tried to find out for themselves who they really are. It seems the ancestors fared better than they currently are. Values that were critical to the ancestors are not being taken seriously by the present generation so they are torn between two worlds - the world of the colonizers and their African world. The story of Iserts' visit to Africa shows some of the value systems of the African in 1735 showing a well placed society with well placed values comparable to a place like Germany as Iserts stated in his letters about his visit.

Personal Reflections

There is so much knowledge that has been acquired and so much more to be learned only if there is time to continue with those things that really interest me. The presence of theologians and African traditional custodians helped me to make the whole process a success. There were times that I did not really feel like continuing because I could not figure out what I was doing. But I had the help and concern of those who also felt that there was something there which needed to be completed. They therefore encouraged me, insisted that what I was doing was a good thing and that they will support me; and that if I needed any help, they are willing to help, and of course they did help.

If I look at where I am now in relation to where I was when I started, I feel I have achieved so much and even though that make me very humble, it has helped to renew my spirits, and energized me because I feel there is more to come. Things have started falling into place and I just want to thank the good Lord for being there by my side and say that I have enjoyed the relationship that I have started to build with my maker, God Almighty.

As a child, I heard negative stories about the Akonedi shrine; so I never thought there would come a day that I would visit it. When Professor Kofi Asare Opoku suggested that it will be an eye opener for me to visit a shrine to see for myself, I was willing because I was beginning to realize through my research that most people have no idea and do not know exactly what goes on regarding some aspects of Tradition and Culture; yet still they will say negative things because of what they have “heard” from other people. After including the shrine visit on the schedule of activities, others started fuming about the program of the Institute and what it stands for.

With all that negativity, I began to have my doubts, but surprisingly, when I asked Prof. Opoku to cancel the visit, he did not insist that the visit should still occur. I am grateful now, that I was able to have that eyewitness experience at the shrine, and to observe the Asafosa Peace Ritual. These experiences serve as a great asset to me now, and I cherish them so much. How can a community ritual for peace be misunderstood, especially when we, Christians have the Holy Communion which is about the same concept of peace? At the Shrine, the inscriptions on the walls were biblical proverbs.

Negativity affects society and because of negativity we cannot realize God's full potential for us. We are always too busy not having time for anything. We create situations where there is envy and jealousy, with no forgiveness and no love for each other. We need to find and invest in things that can help society rather than deprive it. If there is no trust, people cannot come together to form a community and without community, society becomes fragmented with no cohesiveness. The negative portrayal of the shrine could easily have sabotaged my research if I had heeded to the dire warnings given by the local pastors but now that I have seen what happens there, I know better.

There must have been a misunderstanding when the missionaries came to our society. They refused to accept certain facts either because they felt that the people could not possibly have the capacity to think intelligently about spiritual truths, or else they had an ulterior motive. Research shows that the missionaries were more concerned with what was important to them, than the values of that society. There was no respect for the society, and so showed none. In New York, there are times when I go to places in the city and I am perceived to be a messenger picking up a delivery; when in fact I am there for a

meeting. The perception is that you look different and that you can't be doing things they do, therefore you only do things they do not do; i.e. menial jobs.

Therefore you don't or can't have the same interest as their bosses who in all likelihood would be Caucasian. Sometimes it takes others to give affirmation of who one is before one can be accepted as having any sense of reasoning. This research has opened new awareness for me that I could not have imagined, and to really analyze it, I feel there are a lot of brothers and sisters who have no real understanding of African Tradition, and yet they tell others about what they think they know, just because they have heard it explained that way. There is no reason for that, because there are systems of the tradition and culture still in place that can educate us to have understanding of some of the basic things of the traditional culture that we take for granted.

The community was created for unity of the people. What we are all striving for ultimately is to live in peace, that is God's purpose for us and I do believe that because He sent His only son to die for us. The community ritual that I witnessed stood for peace and unity of this community and one of things that struck me was the fact that a lot of Christian clergy look on this as anti-Christian. There was economic advantage for the missionaries, and so values of that society were not taken into consideration.

It seems what the missionaries wanted were the economic benefits, the raw materials, they could get in terms of timber, gold etc, the cheap labor they could use, in the people they recruited and the slaves they could round up to send over to the Americas. Society looks at one differently when one looks, acts, talks and believes in a different religion. Racism can divide the society into groups and makes each group feel differently and superior to each other. The intolerance that the missionaries had for the

people of Africa, because they were different, caused them to do harm to that society.

The love that was in that community has now become hate where each other feels that the image created for them by the missionaries, makes them feel more privileged in their society.

The European missionaries sent back tons and tons of minerals and raw materials to Europe and in many countries, the natural minerals were almost taken for free by the missionaries that at the time of independence, the country did not have much to show for it. Those were the advantages of racism and what it did to the African society.

Until the lion's historians, tell their story of the hunt which is Onyamesom, the hunter's story will always overshadow the story of Onyamesom. What the Churches are doing now is just telling the story of the hunter. It is authoritatively based on the tradition of the hunter, which is a flat denial of God's activity in the history of other people. We cannot realize the full potential in us; given to us from our maker, God Almighty. God has created us as a specific people with value systems that make sense in our own location and environment. If we refuse to accept who we are, then we can lose our identity as a whole community.

We bring what God has given to us into our newly found selves, which come from within us. I am sure God must be angry with us because we refuse to accept who He created us to be. The Institute will create avenues where aspects from our tradition and culture can be used to promote our true self and that can help us to have new thoughts about our gifts and talents in order to be creative for the edification of our own society.

The Institute finds itself in a unique position where it hopes to bring unity and bring all people be they black, white or yellow; a place where all are invited.

There is everything in the Institute that will lead us to deepen the process of inculturation. There are values in Onyamesom that can make us better Christians or better people. The Institute embraces each and every one who is willing and has something new to offer; to help bring new awareness of our true selves. One thing that has been observed in most of the programs we have done in the past three years is that no one has all the answers and in our coming together with the little we know, we learn from each other. The concept of the Baobab tree which is the symbol of TIDAC, gives us the hope and belief that something good can come out of being the family of TIDAC.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION/EVALUATION

Nimdee ye sen ahonya – Ghanaian Proverb
“Knowledge is better than riches”

Christianity was available and accessible to me, and it was easier for me to become a Christian. That was the only religion that I thought I was exposed to, and was educated into. Even though values from the African Tradition came from the few elders in the community who were well versed in the tradition, and enforced various aspects of it without any thorough explanation as to the intent, I did not fully realize that the African Tradition was a way of life and a religion as well. Those elders who took it upon themselves to instill discipline gave me the reason to live with ethics, compassion, honesty, empathy, humility, integrity and communal spirit. I did not learn these through Christianity.

My interest in exploring these parallels was piqued when I came to seminary. When I reflect on my childhood upbringing, I realized that strangely enough, those who were the Bible-toting, Bible-quoting, Sunday-only people in the community where I grew up were not the ones who taught me the way of the Bible. They only lived this life on Sunday, but the rest of the week, they did not adhere to the teaching. It was those who believed in the African Tradition who truly lived the “Word” through their deeds, and embodied the “Word” in its true sense. Their way of life was passed down from their

ancestors, and being obedient, they have implemented it in society, and that is how the present generation benefited from this aspect of *Onyamesom*.

Those Ghanaians who adopted the theology of the Presbyterians, and memorized the Bible chapter and verse did not give me the guidance that I needed, but those who lived their lives by practicing the presence of God, worshipping God in their tradition passed on from their ancestors, by word of mouth and being involved in a participatory form of worship, did. It was through them that I learned that God is good; God is merciful; God is holy; God is powerful; God is limitless and God is awesome. It was from the way my indigenous people lived their lives through the love of God that I came to realize the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

It was through them that I found out about the fellowship of the Spirit, realizing that the Father, Son and Spirit are *One*. African spirituality is one in which the “divine” or “sacred” realm interpenetrates into the daily lives and experiences of human persons so much that religion, culture and society are imperatively interrelated (Olupona 2000). Emphasis is placed on the community, from the considered view that individuals receive their humanity from others and that profound and unfathomed personal growth comes to the lives of individuals in the community when they focus more on others than on themselves, and proverbs such as: “*When a thorn gets into the toe, the whole body bends to pull it out*”, or, “*When the leg breaks, the eyes shed tears*”, accentuate this viewpoint. The community includes the spirit world, the dead, the living and the yet unborn and those who die do not simply disappear, they inhabit the same world in which we find ourselves. Relationships are not limited to humans, for there is interconnectedness

between humans and the world around them and this has serious ecological implications.²¹⁵

I never saw my father go to church; however, it was through him that I learned the ethical values that are still guiding me today. For me, this life is a life that was well lived in that town, my hometown where everyone knows each other and we all belong to a community socializing and living together as one. This is the town where we relate in our mother tongue for the understanding of what the other traditions and culture are about.

As the late Prof. Kwame Bediako wrote in his commentary as an advisor to the ‘Africa Bible Commentary’: “Mother-tongue Scripture has a fundamental place in the engagement of gospel and culture. If people recognize that *Onyankopong* (as God is called by the Akan of Ghana), the God they have known from time immemorial, is their Saviour, and that the coming of the gospel is what they have looked forward to, then God is continuing to ensure that they will hear him each in their own language so that they can marvel at his majesty and his love for them. Our mother tongue is the language in which God speaks to each of us.”²¹⁶

African Spirituality and Symbols

In the area of symbols, the Euro-Christian influence still predominates, and our continued reliance on European symbols reflects more of our benumbing poverty than our fervent Christian faith. Our ancestors said: “*The one who is dressed in other people’s clothes is naked, and the one who is fed on other people’s food is hungry*”. It is

²¹⁵Opoku, *Asante-Opoku-Reindorf Memorial Lecture*, 7-8.

²¹⁶Tokunboh Adeyemo, gen. ed. “*African Bible Commentary*” (Nairobi, Kenya: WordAlive Publishers, 2006), 4.

important for us to make sense of all earlier cultural reaching towards God by our forbears and look everywhere for signs of this and make use of them in our new dispensation. This makes it mandatory for us not to ignore our ancestral symbols and their intuitive spirituality which will undoubtedly enrich our Christianity, and not, as some of us may think, abominably pollute our “pure” Christianity.

The symbol *Gye Nyame* reflects the omnipotence of God, an unequivocal



expression of the greatness of God and the supreme power of God over all creation.

Onyamedua, expresses the absolute dependability of God and God’s constant and unfailing protection.



Nyame bribi wo soro, na ma me nsa nka – God, there is something (blessings) in the heavens, let it reach me.

A prayer symbol that implores God, the never-failing fount of blessings, to shower providential blessings on us.

Nyame bewu na mawu or *Nyame nwu na mawu* – I will die only if God dies or God does not die, I will therefore not die. This is a reference to the *okra*, the part of God in man which returns at death to its source, God, who never dies; one’s *okra*, therefore, never dies.



Obi nka bi – One must not bite another or bite not one another. This is a symbol of the Golden Rule. Since no one wants to be bitten, one must not bite the other. In other words, we dare not wish anything for anyone that we would

be unwilling to accept for ourselves. If we all live by this rule, there would be no injustice in the world.

There has lately surfaced a grossly curious symbol, obviously the creation of an African Christian that distorts the Akan concept of God, virtually turning it on its head, and is quite contrary to Akan theology.



This symbol is called “*Owuo kum Nyame*”, Death killed God, “a symbol of the invincibility of death and the power of God to overcome death” (Clarke 2006:62), and many reputable publications, including The Journal of African Christian Thought, published by the Akrofi Christaller Institute of Mission, Theology and Culture, have perpetuated its distorted message.²¹⁷

The symbol is totally un-Akan and un-African. For, the Akan ancestors would not affirm God’s power over all creation and in the next breath say that death, a creation of God, has killed God! Death does not have an independent existence in Akan thought and if it is necessary for Christian theology for God to prove God’s power over death, by succumbing to death and rising from death, it is totally unnecessary in Akan theology, because God proves God’s power by creating death and a creature does not have power over the Creator. In Akan thought therefore, it is unthinkable that God would succumb to death and prove God’s power by overcoming it by rising from death!²¹⁸

This gross error arises out of a misunderstanding of an Akan drum text that is played when someone dies and condolences are being given to him or her. The text

²¹⁷Opoku, *Asante-Opoku-Reindorf Memorial Lecture*, 22-26.

²¹⁸*Ibid.*

begins by giving condolences to the person who has died and goes on to say that the person has died because the Creator created death and death has killed that person who is being mourned; but most people mistakenly think that that statement suggests that the Creator created death and death has killed the Creator. No! Here is the text:

Dammirifa due! Due! Due!
Odomankoma boo owuo,
Na owuo kum no.
Condolences! Condolences! Condolences!
The Creator, *Odomankoma*, created death
And death has killed him/her (the person we are giving condolences to).

The Akan pronoun, “no”, him/her, in the text refers to the person who is being mourned, not the Creator who created death.²¹⁹

The beliefs, practices and proverbs from those who have lived before us add great depth to our spiritual experience and must not be discarded or forgotten. This is not to say that we should necessarily abandon the faith we have adopted (Christian or Muslim, for instance), but by focusing on these “newer” faiths exclusively, we lose not only our heritage, but an unquestionably valid, wise and useful way of looking at our world. Our lives have been immeasurably enriched by the infusion of new spiritual ideas and practices, but they would become even more so if we added something of our own.

It is our task, as Africans of this generation, my venerable ladies and gentlemen, to make strenuous efforts to demonstrate that the view of the world that our tradition teaches has an innate and sterling integrity of its own and represents a sensible and respectable perspective of the world and a valid means of interpreting experiences (Deloria 2003:285). This is where, I submit, I begin my theological exertions. Our

²¹⁹Opoku, *Asante-Opoku-Reindorf Memorial Lecture*, 22-26.

heritage of spirituality is our stone on which we stand to make an impact on ourselves and our world at large. If we discard it or let circumstances destroy it, we shall have ourselves to blame; for after all our ancestors said: *“The man who does not lick his lips, cannot blame the harmattan for drying them!”*²²⁰

Christianity and the New Spirituality:

With the coming of a new form of spirituality represented by Christianity, an ancestral spiritual tradition that had sustained Africans through the millennia, a heritage that had been the source of creativity and inventiveness, suddenly came to be described as demonic and worthy of unhesitating condemnation.

The new religion held our ancestral spirituality in undisguised and supercilious contempt, not because it did not provide an understanding of the universe for our ancestors, but because it was different from what the protagonists of the new spirituality regarded as religion. The new religion was regarded as the highest form of evolved religiosity and the possessor of the only truth. The bearers of the new spirituality spoke with the authority of God and their interpretation of the Bible was used as proof of the veracity of their utterances.²²¹

Traditional spirituality had to give way to new forms of religion and knowledge of self began to dwindle, for the old identities had little or no place in the new dispensation. This led to the emergence of a new and shallow identity imposed from outside; and the result has been the entrenchment of a negative attitude of Africans towards their own spiritual and cultural heritage, a mortifying imitation and a lamentable

²²⁰Opoku, *Asante-Opoku-Reindorf Memorial Lecture*.22-26.

²²¹Ibid. 14.

lack of originality and reliance on borrowings, and ignoring the ancestral wisdom which warns that “Begged water does not quench thirst” (Lule 2006:162).²²²

The new religion introduced divisions into an otherwise cohesive community. Christians distinguished themselves from pagans on the basis of what they believed and those who became Christians gave up their broader identities. What a person believed became more important than his or her humanity and what was held in common with others in the community. There appeared a division in the community between where Christians lived, Salem, and where the pagans lived, usually called man mu.²²³

Divisions did not end between Christians and pagans, and even continued within the community of Christians: there were Presbyterians, Anglicans, Methodists, Roman Catholics, Seven Day Adventists, and many more. But that was not all. In the Church there were communicants and non-communicants; those who had fallen (won a woahwe ase) and those who were standing upright (won a wonhwee ase); those whose corpses were taken into the church and those whose corpses were not taken into the church, before burial; those at whose funerals the pastor was expected to wear his or her full clericals and those at whose funerals the pastor was expected to wear an ordinary suit or dress. These divisions continue to this day and are a marked feature of the new dispensation.²²⁴

The love and concern for each other was of prime importance to the whole community. I learnt of what it means to love someone. This love which comes from the relationship which we developed in every aspect of our lives in the community is genuine

²²²Opoku, *Asante-Opoku-Reindorf Memorial Lecture*, 14.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid. 15.

and has become part of me, so I cherish its value. It has become part of my life; so then when we are “lost”, we fall back on those relationships because we believe and value them. So I asked myself: Why have we been led to believe that our tradition and culture are antithetical to Christianity? In that society, because of the hospitality as stated by Iserts in 1700 when he visited the Akuapem area, there was respect and acceptance of all others and there is no suspicion of them.

In that society, if one comes into that community as a well mannered person, he is accepted and respected as well. So if there is an agenda, the society is not concerned or worried because the belief is that God has given everything needed by the community to be sufficient. So the community is adequate and comfortable enough that they are not worried as a community.

Effects of Negative Attitudes towards African Culture and its Consequences

A seemingly lasting effect of missionary teaching is the uneasy attitude, nay the fear most African Christians have about their culture and the timorously hesitant approach of the Church to most things African.²²⁵

Robert Rattray commented on the African pupils and converts to Christianity who were:

...quick to see and very ready to follow a trend of thought which denied, or ignored, the possibility of anything useful or good or ethical existing in the African's own religion. The result has been that the cultured and semi-educated African alike (with a few exceptions), when asked about the beliefs of their own people, unconsciously paint them in all the unreal and exotic colours with which their new training and their new environment have taught them to regard them. They feel, and they have been trained to believe that, they are brands plucked from the burning. It is almost impossible that such persons can be sympathetic with their own past, a

²²⁵ Opoku, *Asante-Opoku-Reindorf Memorial Lecture*, 15

past which after all few of them have ever really known, seen, or clearly understood (1923:88).²²⁶

And, as recently as 1999, a primary school teacher and a “devout Christian” at Akropong Akuapem, told an American researcher: “...at first our culture was dirty” (Coe 2005:93). And while most of us may not put it as brusquely as the school teacher did nearly a decade ago, it is still true to say that there are still nagging and paralyzing doubts, inexpressible and haunting fears lurking, insidiously, in the hearts and minds of many of us with regard to the culture and spirituality of our forbears. This makes us have a low estimate of ourselves as a people, saddled with consuming doubts and tremulous uncertainties about ourselves and our inherited culture, which is the inescapable foundation of anything we can do and accomplish in life.²²⁷

Our ancestors said: “Onifuraefo betow obo abo wo no, na ne nan si obo so” – Before a blind person can throw a stone at you, he/she must be standing on a stone. And before we can make any impact on ourselves and others, we must be standing on something as concrete and durable as a rock, and that something is our inherited culture. This is not to suggest, by any stretch of the imagination, that our culture is without blemish; indeed, no culture, however much we may admire and value it, is without blemish. But it is essential for us to uphold and affirm our African cultural identity in order to restore dignity and wholeness to ourselves.

As a people and to graciously acknowledge the fact that we exist by virtue of God’s own divine purpose and, further, that in our Africanness lies a unique expression of God. This unwholesome attitude towards our culture also makes us reject our

²²³ Opoku, *Asante-Opoku-Reindorf Memorial Lecture*, 15.

²²⁷ Ibid., 17.

ancestors' stories about the creation of the world and other foundational tales about human beginnings that we find in Africa and fail to see any abiding spiritual worth in them.

Let me illustrate with a story: An African evangelist confronting a group of people described as “misguided pagans”, told them about the truths of his revealed religion. He told them of the creation of the world in six days and of the fall of the first parents of all humans on earth, Adam and Eve, by eating the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. The deferentially courteous pagans listened attentively to the engagingly buoyant evangelist, and thanked him for his heavenly message. Then one of the elders, believing that good friendship is sharing good things with each other, began to tell the Evangelist how the Creator created the world in four days and how humans were created from clay... And without allowing the old man to complete his story, the obviously indignant and disbelieving Evangelist sternly told the old man that what he had just heard was just a bunch of risible fables and grotesque falsehood, destined to take those who believed such trash to ever-burning hell.

The old man, shocked beyond words by the rather uncivil behavior of the Evangelist, simply asked why the Evangelist had refused to listen and credit their stories, whilst they had listened and believed his (inspired by Vine Deloria 2003:84-85). It is obvious that the Evangelist held on to an absolute paradigm that took precedence over all such stories, and that he held on tenaciously to the conviction that he represented the last word on this matter and failed to appreciate the potential spirituality in the “fables” of the old man. But the old man and his people obviously did not regard their stories of the creation of the earth and man as an absolute historical recording of the creation event and

operated from the wisdom implicit in the Ndebele proverb: “The wise man does not claim that what he says is the final word, but the fool insists” (Pelling 1988:363).²²⁸

Another serious consequence of the negative attitude to our culture is the rather unconscious limiting of God’s self-disclosure to a particular religious and cultural tradition and our inability to see our own African soil as an arena of God’s self-disclosure. This amounts to suggesting that God turned God’s back on us here in Africa or that God had nothing to do with the past of Africa. This makes us fail to appreciate aspects of our spirituality, such as the visual symbols of spirituality, found in what we call Adinkra symbols. These symbols do not adorn our sanctuaries, with the exception of a few churches, such as the Catholic Cathedral in Kumase and the Ridge Church in Accra.²²⁹

The reasons why we do not use them are many – either they are of no spiritual or aesthetic value to us in our new dispensation, or we fail to see any spiritual value in them per se, or that we unconsciously feel that they originate from a “pagan” source and are therefore a thundering threat to our Christian sensibilities, or that using them would amount to regressing into unconscionable heathenism, which we abandoned a long time ago, or that it is preferable to decorate our chapels with European symbols which represent enlightenment. Ignorance may also be part of the problem, because there is the thinking that paganism reigned supreme in Africa before the coming of Christianity and that there cannot be any spiritual insights worth considering by Christians or that Christianity has replaced the old spirituality.²³⁰

²²⁸ Opoku, *Asante-Opoku-Reindorf Memorial Lecture*, 18.

²²⁹ Ibid., 19.

²³⁰ Ibid.

These symbols and their potential in enriching a brand of Christianity we could call our own, were therefore ignored and not studied deeply and it amounted to doing what the Akan proverb cautions against: “Do not throw away the large game bird (you have caught) at the mere sound made by a large antelope”. I shall deal with these symbols in the next section. The negative attitude to our culture also breeds dependence and imitation, growing out of the feeling that the Church is not ours and that it was brought here by missionaries and further, that we should hold on firmly and tenaciously to the missionary tradition and present it without adding anything to it.

These elders in the community that I grew up in showed me generosity by giving me so much that I have learned to give to others. I learned that it is not painful to give, but rather it's joyful. This freedom from pettiness in character and mind has been with me ever since. That quality of not putting myself first but the willingness to give of my time and my effort for others, in that local society I learned to show more devotion and unselfishness than what is done in most urban areas. That quality of being warm-hearted, considerate, humane and sympathetic became real to me.

Because African Tradition respected and valued other religions, Christianity and Islam were able to survive alongside the communities of the African Tradition.

Onyamesom/African Traditional Religion continues to survive because of the worship of the one God, *Onyankopong* the same God as that of the Christians. There are numerous stories about ancient African Traditional values that have aided/helped Christianity to survive. Though it needs telling, there is some reticence to think that anyone from the West is adequately equipped to tell it. Yet it is so important to the history of Africa and

global Christianity that it needs to be told accurately and without unfounded conjectures.²³¹

Some Westerners will turn away from ever hearing of African's ancient Christian heritage because of seated prejudices about the assumed unimportance of Africa to World History.²³² It especially needs to be retold in Africa by African parent to African children. How Africa shaped the Western mind is a story that belongs to the West, as well as to Africa.²³³

This project has opened avenues that I could never have imagined would exist outside the Church. There are others who the Church refuses to include, and yet the lives of the Church members leave much to be desired. Some of the world religions like Christianity and Islam have founders who started them and developed the value systems that are important to them. African Religion or *Onyamesom*, which started as oral tradition is not the same. It has its own system unique only to those who practice it. It evolved slowly through many centuries as people responded to the situations of their lives and reflected upon their experiences. Many factors have played a part in its development, such as geographical environment, i.e. mountains, rivers, deserts and forests; the change of seasons; the power of nature such as earthquakes, thunderstorms and volcanoes, calamities, epidemics, diseases, birth and death; and, major historical events like wars, locust invasions, famines, migrations and so on.²³⁴

²³¹ Oden, "The Christian Mind", 35.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid., 36.

²³⁴ Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion*, 16.

Just as there were no founders of African Religion, there have been no reformers, preachers or missionaries to change it, improve it or export it to other countries. The changes that have affected African Religion have sprung up out of the historical changes in the lives of the people concerned.²³⁵ The value systems in African Religion were handed down through the ancestors from generation to generation, and they believe that in keeping and pursuing those values, they are in tune with their creator.

The Bible is the sacred book of Christianity, and the Qur'an is the book of Islam. African religion has no scriptures or holy books. It is written in the history, the hearts and experiences of the people. Having no sacred scriptures, it has been able to move with the times and it has produced no religious controversies. People are free to hold different views and beliefs without the danger of being accused of heresy or falsehood. But on the other hand, because there is no written word, it is difficult to tell what African Religion stood for some 500 years ago²³⁶.

In reconciliation if you do not forget yesterday's problem, you may not have anyone to play with²³⁷. You have to move on and free yourself to achieve internal freedom, which brings happiness because you do not carry any load. There is an Akan practice that when your neighbor visits you, the first thing you do before welcoming him is to give him a glass of water. Water signifies peace, and with peace, there is a way to realize truth. "Truth is like a baobab tree", it leads to openness and avoidance of

²³⁵ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 16.

²³⁶ Ibid., 17.

²³⁷ An Akan proverb.

conflicts²³⁸. God has given us His truth which is quite evident in every aspect of our lives.

In matters of truth, no single religion exhausts all there is to know about God, and when we claim absolute truth as our possession and despise others, we discredit God. When we recognize that others also have the truth; we are ready to build bridges and not walls. When one feels that there is value in their statement, there is an effort to get the point across. Because some Africans are a bit timid and very hospitable by nature; and respect others and their views; they did not dispute European views. This acceptance gave them too much confidence, and allowed European missionaries to disrespect and demean aspects of our culture which they did not understand.

Rather than having patience to wait, the missionaries assumed that those concepts from the Africans do not make sense to them and started to write their own interpretations of what they saw, added to what was told to them by some of the Africans who agreed with them. They were able to write these misinterpretations because they did not have an understanding of the people and their culture. The ones they befriended had ulterior motives in spreading the false claims they made. One has to live and work in new societies to really understand some of their reasoning, but since they had their agenda, they did not care whether what they wrote or said hurt the society they took advantage. Instead of trying to have a better understanding of that society and their culture, they assumed that those concepts do not make sense and so collaborating with other Africans, they wrote what they perceived about the society and not what the actual facts were.

²³⁸ An Akan proverb.

There are other explanations that come only when conditions that give meaning to some of the practices, materialize. In speech class in college, I was told that my speech was not aggressive enough and that I would not make it in America. What I told my professors was, what about those pastors and ministers who have so much patience in trying to talk to others with so much humility? I had never thought of ever becoming a pastor. For me to respond that way was something that really surprises me when I think about it now. Aggression is not the only way to get a message or the way to be understood. When our outbursts have substance, then it can be of use to societies that find wisdom in these sayings. We have been created in the image of God, and have been given dominion over all creation, so why do we have all the problems that we have in this present time?

That assertion was upsetting to me then but now I realize that they were right. If some of us Africans can be a little more aggressive in our beliefs and thoughts, and hold them dearly as something the Creator has given us for our own good, we could influence others in our beliefs when we are persistent and continue to create a dialogue that will sustain than just to embrace what has been shoved down our throats without any thought. Research shows that there were those who believed that what was available was from God and that having and dealing with those things in the best way fitting to them is true worship to God who created everything in their midst. God is revered, therefore He cannot be approached directly; going through other mediums of His creation is the best way to worship Him.

There are many aspects of culture which can stand the test of time. It is rather unfortunate that we, African Christians cannot and do not see the differences between

Christianity and the European culture that were offered to us as a package deal. Even though a lot of Europeans have kept their culture, e.g. Jews, Italians, Greeks, Scottish, Irish etc, due to a misconception perpetuated on Africans, some of us consider our culture to be inferior compared to that of the Europeans without taking time to find out and compare the culture to the European culture.

The inclusion of Dr. Iserts' letter was to show the kind of culture that existed prior to the advent of *Kristosom*. There was etiquette, kindness, protocol and welcoming of strangers. The value of tradition is often not fully understood, especially by the younger generation but later on in life, one tends to appreciate the profound mystical and philosophical purpose of tradition. Africa has a rich heritage that one should be proud of because one can never find another place like home. That is the message I got from my father, a writing on the wall of his bedroom, but I never took time to read or recognize it until quite recently on one of my trips home that I realized the value in that picture still hanging on the wall of the room.

I can say through my research that Africans had a religion prior to the advent of *Kristosom*. *Onyamesom* was lived in their everyday lives. Those who refused to give up their culture have lived their lives to the fullest without Christianity, and they all die the same deaths as Christians. Africans had a religion before the missionaries came. This is not because I read it in books, but because I have witnessed it. I have heard of traditions which have been handed down from generations ago, prior to the coming of the missionaries coming to the shores of West Africa and "making things fall apart until, the center cannot hold any more" crumbling before our very eyes. Africans had something,

Africans had religion, Africans taught the world about religion and it is time to tell our own story and make the world listen and accept some of the truth claims.

In an article written in the World Council of Churches Magazine, Inter-religious Dialogue and Cooperation, Issue No. 49 July, 2007 Dr. Prince Conteh asks the question “Can the African Christian Problem Ever Be Resolved?” His article was about the Limba people of Sierra Leone and the issues they were having with the Christian churches. For the Limba, like many Africans, religion is a way of life. There is no sharp dividing line between religion and culture. They believe that their religion and culture originated from God, and cannot be parted with or replaced.

African Traditional Religion is the heritage into which the traditionalists were born. It is maintained by God and influenced by the ancestors. It "emerged from the sustaining faith held by the forebears of the present generation" and is "being practiced today in various forms and intensities" in African homelands and settlements. For these reasons, the complete renunciation of their God-given heritage in favour of a foreign culture, as the church requires, seems a very difficult task, and is tantamount to losing their entire heritage, identity, and place, both spiritually and physically within their religio-cultural community.²³⁹

This is why African Christians "do not always adhere to religious and ritual demands that are formulated and expressed by the leaders of their churches. Even long after their conversion to Christianity; the African traditional worldview persists in the lives of Christian converts. Successive missionaries attacked African culture, and required a complete abandonment of African culture and practice. Christ was "presented

²³⁹Conteh, "Can the African Christian Problem Ever be solved?" 49 9 (July, 2007).

as the answer to the questions a white man would ask, the solution to the needs that a Western man would feel, the Saviour of the world of the European world-view, the object of the adoration and prayer of historic Christendom.²⁴⁰

Attempts were not made to answer the needs of Africans yet the missionaries enforced on Christian converts, a complete break from the African beliefs and culture that met those needs. Cultural insensitivity is also displayed in the production of religious pictures, and films that are found almost everywhere in Africa portraying Jesus as a white man, from a white mother, and as the leader of white disciples. Insensitivity to African culture and worldview was not unique to Euro-American missionaries.

Laurenti Magesa in support of the universal recognition of ATR argued that "orality alone cannot disqualify a religious system from qualitative greatness" because Judaism, Christianity and Islam were all orally-based for long periods of time before their teachings were "codified in writing. It was not on account of their sacred writings that these religions attained recognition, so it is illogical to make this a requirement for the recognition of ATR. ATR theology is written on the hearts, minds, words, actions and symbols of the African people. A factor that is responsible for the survival of African Religion.²⁴¹

I believe that religion is part of the daily life of the African. I still value some of the ethics and values that were instilled in me by the society when I was growing up. My father lived in Lagos, Nigeria, as an Education Officer before retiring to live permanently in Ghana. On the wall of his bedroom, there was a picture below the mirror which was

²⁴⁰Conteh, "Can the African Christian Problem Ever be solved?", 49

²⁴¹Ibid.

quite significant to him. He had placed it in a position where anyone entering the room could not help but see it and the meaning of the inscription comes down to “home is where the heart is” and this is what it says:

East you may ramble

West you may roam

But never will you find a place just like home”²⁴² (See Appendix 20)

This picture was signed and dated 12/23/ 1935 on the back by my father when he was at that time living in Enugu, Nigeria. This sign has always reminded me that I have to come home because home is where the heart is. I have always noticed that picture and took it for granted until quite recently on one of my visits to Ghana, it really spoke to me and that was when I realized the importance of that quotation. You can never be happy until you are at home and that home is where the heart is.

We can find our real home when we open our hearts and minds to the Spirit of God to be filled with what God feels we need to have for life to be worth living. The lives we have lived over the years help us to have meaning and when it has shaped us to be closer to our Creator, then life starts to have meaning and purpose of our Creator. I feel privileged to have been filled with the Spirit of God to realize this dream which is dear to me.

Since my father died in 1966, that room had become the “men’s room” where many generations of people, brothers, uncles, cousins, nephews used that room and have removed pictures and other hangings on the walls of the room but have never touched this picture until last April when my brother and I were reminiscing about home and our

²⁴²This has always pulled me towards going home. This started my journey back.

father and when I went to Akropong took it and kept it for myself. I will also hang it in my room and maybe it will have an impact on my five sons who were all born in America. I thank my parents for giving me life in the human world, I thank them for giving me discipline and I thank my father for taking me with him wherever he went until his death; but lastly, I thank God for giving me my father and my mother.

EVALUATION

Nokware te se ɔɔdaɔɔ obaakofo nsa ntumi ntwā ho nhyia - Ghanaian Proverb
(*Truth is like a baobab tree, one person's arms cannot go around it*)

My initial dream was to get to know God better and my journey towards that started with the first step of taking some courses at the Seminary because I was an Elder at Bethel Presbyterian Church. These courses opened my eyes to the fact that there was a yearning in me to know more about myself. Some of the questions, which had obviously been buried deep within me, began to surface and I just knew that I had to go further. I believe that it was Divine providence that I met Professor Kofi Asare Opoku, just when my mind was opening up to new dimensions and new discoveries about my tradition and culture.

My spirits have been deepened by my experiences, and I have come to realize that gospel is not specific to Christians only, because gospel applies to all system of beliefs. If one has faith and believes, whatever one believes in and however one lives their life in accordance with those beliefs and values, then that is gospel to that person. It applies to anyone with a belief system. I am happy to realize that the love for my community came from my background in African Tradition and Culture. Bringing that into my Christian life has deepened my belief and trust in the Lord; allowing me to have a continuous and daily relationship and to learn new ways of adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication.

My challenge statement was to examine festivals and rituals and to specifically compare the Asafosa Peace Ritual (APR) to the Christian Holy Communion. I accomplished what I set out to do. I witnessed this Ritual and having gone through so many Christian Holy Communion, could compare the Ritual to the communion. I am

happy to say that I will not hesitate to disseminate the information about APR on the website of TIDAC. I was happy to hear that one of the neighboring chiefs said that he has incorporated the ritual in his township because of the message it conveyed of peace and togetherness.

When I decided to tackle this subject for my demonstration project, I did not realize how much it would cost. I had a budget in mind, but could not strictly adhere to it. It has been quite expensive, but then again, what is expensive? No matter the cost, the gains, the expansion, the knowledge and experience surpass anything I thought would happen.

Now I have a base from which I can operate, both in Ghana and in the U.S. Some of the conferences I have participated in, for example, the Global conference with Jeffrey Sachs et al, and the co-sponsorship of Rev. Akpan's book "*Say you are One of Them*", have all happened because of this journey, and the transformation that has taken place has no measure. I cherish it so much that I feel this is the beginning of something new. When we have opened our hearts for the Spirit, it comes to occupy the empty space and if the Spirit is comfortable then it can stay with us to influence us to do things I guess from within us. Spirit I am open and ready to be filled to do what is right to follow what is truthful and continue throughout the journey. It then uses us to create new beginnings, which only come from the Spirit.

That transformation has taken place in my heart, mind and body. When I read through the journals and realize the impact that some of these visits have had on the team members, I thank God Almighty for giving me the idea and making it all possible. I have taken the liberty of including some of the comments made by some members of the team

I put together to serve as witnesses to the experience, describing subsequent transformation that took place.

The missionaries preached about forgiveness. Perhaps this is why they were able to take away family and community lands which belonged to the various families and communities of Africans for their individual use. They did not see any wrongs; also they could be forgiven, after they repented of their sins. The land belongs to the people and is not sold or given to anyone outside of the community. They also treated the culture of the African as inferior. This changes the way we look at the Akonedi Shrine. In this shrine you are held accountable for your wrongs, and no matter how sorry you may be for forgiveness is not just given, it must be earned.

CHAPTER 7

RESEARCH

Nea onim wɔ tu mi sen nea onnim

Someone who knows overpowers the one who does not know- African Proverb

My research was in the form of direct personal interviews, observations as well as utilizing the print media. Specifically I used books written by both African and European theologians and others whose work has a direct impact on my project. I was amazed at the wealth of information available to aid me in my research. This has created an understanding for me where I am really appreciative of where I am now, versus where I was when I started this research project.

I am at a point where I am now energized and ready to continue with more research, because of the amount of information and knowledge available for one to learn and have a better understanding of life. The historical understanding of what the Europeans thought about African Traditional Religion and the Festivals and Rituals has proven to be biased in some cases and incorrect in others; if the Europeans had taken the time to try to understand the culture and tradition, all this confusion could have been avoided. The missionaries created a “mess” through their approach. It seemed their economic agenda was more important than their inculturation process.

The whole continent of Africa is still dealing with the problems they have created - in fact, the whole world is dealing with these issues of the European invasion, carving out territories, taking control over lands that did not belong to them, forming countries

with groups of people who do not belong to each other. They took possession of minerals and artifacts and many other things belonging to Africans to enrich themselves, and so when the big 8 of the super rich countries have their summits, they need to remember that they are not just AID to these African countries but they are actually giving back some of the valuables that were taken without the permission from these African countries.

To be current, I used the research facilities of several institutions. I also included works from biblical studies as well as social theory. The research questions were as follows: Historical, Theological and Educational.

Historical

Historically, what I found out through my research was that the Europeans had misconceptions about the African tradition and rituals. In several of the books I read, the same sentiment of incorrect classifications of the African Traditions and Rituals run through most of the books. Their lack of understanding and bias was apparent in most of the books. Even though there are many books written by African Theologians and other African authors, most of the books were published internally, did not find a good market outside the community. They are not used as textbooks and the marketing of these books have been poor and most of the books are not readily available because they are out of print.

It seems that early literature on Africa, written mostly by non-Africans did not adequately represent Africans because the views on culture were usually overlooked or deliberately minimized. The writers, who were mainly European explorers, missionaries or anthropologists, showed the European misconceptions and their biases and particular interest in their writings.

Examples can be found in Professor Kofi Asare Opoku's book on West African Traditional Religion; where the early missionary accounts on Africans were represented as a people immersed in crippling superstitions, whose religion lacked any abiding values and who were therefore a fitting object of evangelization.²⁴³ Another example of misrepresentation was by Robert Moffat, a nineteenth-century missionary who worked among the natives in South Africa, wrote that Satan had erased every vestige of religious impression from their minds. Another writer, the German explorer Leo

²⁴³ Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion*, 1.

Frobenius, stated in his book, *The Voice of Africa*, that before he set foot in Africa, he had read the following words in a German magazine: “Before the introduction of a genuine faith and higher standard of culture by the Arabs, the natives had no political organization nor strictly speaking, any religion. Therefore, in examining the pre-Muhammedan condition of the Negro races, we must confine ourselves to the description of their crude fetishism, their brutal, and often cannibalistic customs, their vulgar repulsive idols...None but the most primitive instincts determine the lives and conduct of Negroes who lacked every kind of ethical inspiration.”²⁴⁴

Another African Theologian, John Mbiti, in his book, *Introduction to African Religion*, goes into detail about the misconceptions about African Traditional Religion. Some of the wrong ideas said about African Traditional Religion were: ancestor worship, superstition, animism, paganism magic, fetishism.²⁴⁵

Yet another African author T.N.O. Quarcoopome explains his reasons for writing in the introductory part of his book, *West African Traditional Religion* as to inform, educate and to disabuse the minds of Africans and especially Westerners that the study of West African Traditional Religion has become a matter of urgent necessity in the contemporary world.²⁴⁶

The contemporary African is in search of self-determination and self-assertion. He finds himself in a situation where his culture is at crossroads with alien cultures. He has been brain-washed into disowning his own culture and to embrace alien cultures and values, some of which he does not claim to understand..... In this search for self-identity cognizance

²⁴⁴ Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion*, 2.

²⁴⁵ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 17-19.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 14.

must be taken of the African Traditional Religion which is at the root of African life and thought.²⁴⁷

When I read the excerpt from Dr. Iserts' letter about the hospitality, warmth and protocol shown him when he visited Akropong in the 1700s, I became upset because Iserts clearly and totally refutes some of the writings about "primitive" Africa and this was prior to the onset of the missionary travels.

The Missionaries had an impact on the Africans everywhere they visited. It seemed that the missionaries initially attracted the Africans who were misplaced by societal standards. A clear example of that can be found in Chinua Achebe's "Things Fall Apart". One common thread that I realized run through the lives of the Ghanaian missionaries was that they tried to use their position as missionaries to become involved in the political, factional and local warfare and issues of the time.

This hurt their cause; they did not consider what was needed for the peaceful coexistence. For some of the missionary recruits, their reasons were more as a vendetta against the family as was in the case of David Asante in the Akan society in Ghana, who because he could not be a chief, decided to use his newly –found status as a pastor to persecute his own family. Some of the other missionaries such as Carl Reindorf and Theophilus Opoku persevered because they did not get involved in the socio-political issues; even though the people of Larteh wanted foreigners Opoku due to his persistence was able to get some natives of the town of Larteh to convert to Christianity.

²⁴⁷Quarcoopome, *West African Traditional Religion*, 10.

Theological

Christian Holy Communion is the sacrament established by the Apostles of Jesus Christ after His death in remembrance of His last Passover meal with His disciples. "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup when he had supped, saying, this is my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." (1st Corinthians 11:23-24). There are different opinions as to whether Jesus actually celebrated the Passover because 1) Jesus had the Last Supper a day early and 2) when Passover time actually occurred – Good Friday, Jesus has died and had been buried.

Even though the last supper appears in the three Synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke as well as in Corinthians 1, the version in John does not fully describe the meal or the words Jesus used when he passed the bread and wine to his disciples. Jesus instead washed the feet of his disciples telling them about the merits of humility in John's version. Still others have a problem with the celebration of Easter because of its significance in Christian life. The celebration of Easter Sunday is hailed as the most important religious holiday of Christianity, yet the holiday does not have its origin from the teachings of Christ and his apostles, or anywhere else in the Holy Bible.

The word "Easter," the English word for "Ishtar," is found only once in the King James Version of the Bible, (Acts 12:4) and there, it is believed to have been intentionally mistranslated from the Greek word *pascha*, which in reality should have been Passover. It was supposedly correctly translated as "Passover" in 28 other sections in the King James Version of the New Testament. Easter was not celebrated as a so

called Christian holiday until after the "Catholic Nicene Council" was convened in 325 AD.²⁴⁸

According to the history of Mamfe, the Asafosa Peace Ritual (APR) started when five nomadic families settled at that location to form a township. To live together in harmony, the five family heads decided to set aside time to settle disputes that may have arisen between individuals as well as families during the first year at their new settlement. They decided on one appointed day where each family head was requested to bring a pot of palm wine to a meeting for sharing among themselves.

To demonstrate that none of them bore any ill feeling towards each other, they mixed the drinks in one common pot and all five family heads drank portions of the mixed drink. The remainder was shared among members of the families, accompanied by merry making, to symbolize the togetherness of the families. This demonstration of togetherness has been celebrated for over 450 years and that day is called Asafosa Nom Da meaning the day of communal drinks.

The Asafosa Peace Ritual (APR) is similar to the Christian Holy Communion (CHC) in that it symbolizes peace. It is also a communal participation. There are differences however, in that the celebration of this ritual is once a year and the dates are determined by the number of times the Akwasidae and Awukudae days are celebrated. The festival fluctuates between December and January. APR is celebrated once a year whereas the Christian Holy Communion is celebrated every Sunday by Episcopalians and Catholics, once a month by Presbyterians and other reformed churches.

²⁴⁸ Knox College *True Christians celebrate Passover: The Passion and the Passover*, <http://www.theZephyr.com> (accessed October 29, 2009).

This Ritual, which is part of the overall Festival of Ohum, was organized by the community, to bring peace and harmony. It is unlike Holy Communion (CHC) because the CHC ritual is viewed as a mandate from “Jesus”; that you have to celebrate Holy Communion because you would be taking in, a part of Jesus Christ. The Peace ritual is mandated by the community and celebrated by the community and so there is a social aspect to it.

APR is a community event unlike the CHC which is a church mandated celebration. CHC can also be individualistic in that for example, with Catholics, the individual goes to confession prior to communion and Episcopalians can choose not to have communion if they do not feel that they are well prepared to receive it. The APR involves the whole township and the ritual is a public affair and so when your family does not participate, it is assumed that there are differences between your family and others in the community.

The families of Mamfe Township, tell the story of a spirit founded at that location there by one of the five family members and this spirit (Topré) told them that they would always have peace, if they adhered to the rules and principles required for the township because that spirit was a spirit of peace. So having settled in the township that spirit has guided the families who know about the rules and principles to live by in the township. Still, the main thrust and purpose of the APR and the CHC are peace and community relationship.

On the theology of the Christian Holy Communion, some consider the Lord's Supper first, as

1. First as a symbolic communal meal of thanksgiving to God;
2. Second, as a celebration of the presence of Christ; and

3. Third, as a ritual of forgiveness, community, peace, and joy in the power of the Spirit and to the glory of the God.

Many Christian denominations classify the Christian Holy Communion as a Eucharist is a sacrament. Different Christian denominations have their explanation of what happens in the Eucharist. Some recognize a special presence of Christ in the rite. Other denominations such as Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox churches see the consecrated elements as the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Lutherans believe that the body and blood are present in, with and under the forms of bread and wine – the sacramental union. The Reformed Churches believe in a spiritual real presence of Christ by the power of the Spirit and as received by faith. Others believe that the Eucharist is symbolic – in the memory of the death of Christ.

Educational

As stated earlier, the missionaries treated the rituals of Africa with disdain and it continues to this day. An example of how the church treats Africans who appreciate their culture is what the church did to Dr. Ephraim Amu. He went to seminary but believed that his culture was just as important as that of the European culture. He chose to wear his native clothes in the pulpit and that cost him his license to preach. The Presbyterian Church authorities banned him because he disobeyed set norms which were to wear European clothes in the pulpit. The Ghanaians were totally against it without fully understanding the value of the African culture. They just had the feeling that anything European is good. This mentality still persists today and that could be the reason why I was advised against visiting the Akonedi shrine by some of the local Ghanaian pastors.

It is rather unfortunate that even when a forum is scheduled with the church to have a dialogue with the practitioners of ATR, the custodians of ATR was not honored and yet still they are not hesitant in “bashing” them constantly through their sermons in the church. Christianity is having a negative impact on the African culture. The church hierarchy sometimes frowns on clergy wearing traditional clothes. They would rather clergy wear European clothes even when the traditional clothes would be a better choice.

In our last Winterim NYTS program in January, 2010 we were invited to observe the Durbar of the Chief of Mamfe at the Ohum festival on Saturday, January 9, 2010. I was the only one who wore a navy suit and before getting to the durbar grounds, Rabbi Jo, Jewish Rabbi and a doctoral candidate of ministry at the NYTS a participant of the program had asked me if I did not appreciate the traditional clothing that other men in the society wore. I explained that I do but when I wear them, other local pastors are not too comfortable with me because as pastors most of them wear the European mandated

clothes. When we got to the durbar grounds, I realized that I was the only one wearing European suit and I began to feel very uncomfortable so I went home and changed into traditional clothes. I was able to get back in time to have an audience with the President of the Republic of Ghana.

It did not feel like I was part of the society initially but when I came back I felt more at ease and relaxed. I hope that in trying to be part of the community, we will try to present ourselves in a way that depicts us as being part of that society, and also participating in the concerns of the community to create good and better understanding within the whole community.

When others have dared to venture into researching about African Traditional Religion, that person is instantly branded and ostracized. I believe that with faith, one can be able to withstand any kind of scrutiny that can come from those who are against finding understanding in our own surroundings. The church now finds itself in a quandary because many of the newly installed chiefs who claim to be Christian are determined not to abandon their cultural/traditional duties for the sake of the church. They see the possibilities of reforming certain actions within the tradition which they may deem to be unchristian.

It is a good sign when traditional leaders are ready to dialogue with the church because without a good understanding of the Tradition, Christians will always have issue without having a good understanding of what the Tradition is about. With the issues of understanding and acceptance being resolved, it becomes easier for Christians to be better Christians and worship God in truth.

CHAPTER 8

MINISTERIAL COMPETENCIES

Nea osua na ɔkyere
He who learns, teaches- An African proverb

The Site Team and I discussed the different competencies. The process used was as follows: each competency was discussed in relation to the candidate as to whether it was relevant to the candidate or not at the point of his ministry. Some competencies were dismissed out of hand as not being relevant whereas other competencies warranted a lot of discussion. The discussions were in relation to the challenge statement and the bearing it will have on the research project but most importantly if the research project will hone the competencies chosen. The ministerial competencies the Site Team and I decided upon are as follows:

Prophetic Agent:

The competence of a prophetic agent is crucial for developing an awareness of the value system in the identity of one that comes from the African Culture and Tradition.

As the late Rev. Dr. Kwame Bediako explained:

Scripture is crucial. Mother tongue Scripture has a fundamental place in the engagement of gospel and culture. If people will recognize that *Onyankopong*, the God they have known from time immemorial, is their Savior, and that the coming of the gospel is what they have looked forward to, what they need, then God has ensured and continues to ensure that they will hear him each in their own language so they can marvel at

his majesty and his love for them. Rather it is as we take the experiences, the struggle, the engagement in one context and funnel it through our own reading and experience of the Scripture in the mother tongue, that we find that other Christian stories do indeed illuminate our story. The role of the

mother tongue Scripture is crucial because that is the only language that God speaks to each of us. God does not speak a sacred, esoteric, special or caste language, but vernacular, ordinary, common language, so that we may hear him and we may realize that this gospel is about us and that we have been invited to join that company that no one could number, from every people, tribe, tongue, nation and language.

Being a prophetic agent will be an agent of change. My mentor, who I believe to be an ideal prophetic agent, is the late Kwame Bediako. He is the one I would like to emulate, and I will read up on his life work to give me a sense of direction as to where I should go. The commitment to the transformation of the world is very important to this project. I am seeking to change the minds of Christians about what has been told to them about the African Traditional Religion being antithetical to Christianity. I would like them to know that it is possible for the two to co-exist.

I would like to learn more about the African Traditional Religion, and be prophetic by raising awareness of Ghanaians, and by bringing/leading my brothers and sisters home and to learn about the African Tradition and culture and how it shapes our Christian identity and brings us into the full realization of who the true God is and what He has done and is continuing to do to make us real heirs of the Kingdom of God. There has always been the assurance of His being there for us and not paying attention is the reason we are missing out on that fact.

The most priceless gift that can be given is the remembrance of this divine connection that unites us all. God is always calling us to greater works than those who have gone before us, always breathing into us the power to do better, create evolve beyond the pure potential of the infinite realm of possibilities.

Ecumenist:

To be in ministry in today's world is to be an ecumenist. To develop this skill, I will learn more about other faiths and religions of this world, and try to build a cohesive community around me. The world has become very global in its setting and as a minister, I have to be knowledgeable and have a healthy amount of appreciation of other denominational, confessional, cultural and religious traditions. My project can be called ecumenical, because it seeks to educate people of all denominations and not only Christians about the African culture.

The Institute will foster dialogue and understanding across denominational, confessional, cultural and religious lines. In my ministry, I will strive to provide structured opportunities for interdenominational, multicultural, and multi-faith worship, education and action. The congregational needs, concerns and community development of other groups and congregations will be of utmost importance because they directly impact the goals of my ministry.

My research has made it obvious to me that people of all religions have to be invited to the table to be a part of the Institute. The Institute will also attempt to educate the communities the importance of culture and the part it plays in our lives. The Institute will also bring up the histories of conflicts, oppression and violence in a way that we can learn from them and do better in our inter-relations with different faiths.

Christian ecumenism, in the narrower sense referred to above, is the promotion of unity or cooperation between distinct religious groups and denominations of Christianity. Ecumenism in this broad sense is religious pluralism, distinguished from ecumenism within a faith movement. The interfaith movement strives for greater mutual respect,

toleration, and co-operation among the world religions. Ecumenism as interfaith dialogue between representatives of diverse faiths, promotes better relations, tolerance, mutual respect and cooperation, whether among Christian denominations, or between Christianity and other faiths. I hope I will be able to promote, through the Institute, some of the Festivals and Rituals of our society so the Christian community does not see it as sacrilegious.

Administrator/Leader:

In my discussions with the Site Team, the decision was made to put these two competencies together. To be an effective leader, one must be a good administrator, and so we decided to address these competencies as one. I will develop my skills as a communicator by making and delivering clear and concise decisions. As an administrator, it will be important for me to have clarity and to be succinct in my analysis of any situation that I encounter. I will work on bringing clarity to my decisions and forging a clear sense of direction to my team. I will have to establish realistic goals that my community and I can attain.

This project will assist me to develop an inclusive decision-making style. I will need to identify and make use of personal and material resources of my congregation, organization and community. This project will help me understand group processes and dynamics and sharpen my ability to work with them. This project will also help improve my ability to delegate, and through the various tasks that are a part of the mission, I will be able to strengthen my skills. I should be able to polish my ability to handle details with precision, accuracy, efficiency and organization as well as sharpen my skills of maintaining effective lines of communication.

As a leader, I should be willing to learn from others and be humbled by their knowledge and my lack of it. The reason why we believed that the two competencies belong together is that an administrator should have the ability to communicate an overall sense of direction and to enable others to accomplish it – just as a leader should. As a leader, I will sharpen my skills of having the willingness and abilities to take initiatives and to delegate where necessary. My respect for talents and abilities of others continues

to grow every day, and I believe will continue to grow with this project. I have always been open to constructive criticism and this project will sharpen my ability to give it back. I will be able to motivate others to bring out the best in them and acknowledge their input. As I have learned from Professor Opoku, a renowned theologian, knowledge is like a baobab tree and so should be shared. With that in mind, I will share the knowledge I gain through the publications printed in association with the Institute so that others may be enlightened.

Through the activities of the demonstration project I have realized that the qualities of a good leader which is one who uses his or her credibility and capabilities to influence people in a particular context to pursue their God-given direction are qualities that were brought out in me. One of the key ability of influence people is their credibility and no leader can lead without it.

Leaders who know where they are going and have a view of mission, can help their flock visualize that vision and at the same time use that vision to attract followers. In leadership, relationship is about people and without people there cannot be good leadership. Practicing Godly love with other people allows things to fall into place. By requesting boldness and confidence from God and practice, one can develop the ability to do what he has been called to do. I believe I was able to be a leader of the team to visualize my vision. These were achieved through the “Aha” moments from some of the team members.

Our approach should be through problem solving and decision making through our everyday effort which can challenge us to be more ready in tackling difficult issues that confront us. As a leader, your word is your honor and your actions are its

demonstration. This project has made me realize the importance of honesty in all my dealings especially with the team. Even when you think no one is watching, someone probably is and God certainly is watching; with this realization, it has become very important to me to make sure I try to find out where my team members stand on issues. A

As a leader you have to make it a goal to practice honesty in all dealings and be is a realistic goal because that could bring clear conscience. Setting goals and writing them down opens up the possibility of achieving them and with me writing down the goals of this project made it easy for me to achieve them even when I had make changes to some of the activities.

This demonstration project has had a profound impact on me. I started out as a leader in my own right but there are certain qualities as a leader that have been honed in such as the ability to reason with others, listening to all sides, the ability to accept criticisms without taking them personally but in the moment when the issue has occurred. I am profoundly grateful that God has given me this opportunity to practice humility.

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APPENDIX 1

Site Team Analysis

Members of the site team were excited about this challenge statement and they came up with several good parallels in the scripture that could be found in African Traditional Religion. Most of the site team members were involved in the Winterim seminar held at Akropong in December, 2007/January 2008, and so were part of discussions with the chiefs. They visited some of the natural habitats that were discussed, and could sense the spirituality in African Traditional Religion. I scheduled several Site Team meetings prior to making a decision on which challenge. The discussion centered on spirituality in African Traditional Religion. Some of the parallels the site team felt should be looked at in terms of spirituality were as follows:

When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation." (Matthew 12: 43-45)

When you repent of your sins and give your life to God, you are filled with His goodness and His mercy. However, if you do not follow his steps and fill your house with his goodness, you will be filled with spirits that do not bode well for you.

You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with every one born of the Spirit." (John 3:7-8)

The discussion with the site team was on how God created spirits, and to connect this to the present world. We are born in evil and "get rid of it when you follow Jesus." But is that really true? There is no difference between culture and Christianity. When there is an issue in the church, sometimes no one bothers to investigate it, and yet people are

quick to jump to conclusions, taking sides without really finding out what the right answer should be.

There was a discussion about the Asafosa Peace Ritual (APR) and the spirituality surrounding the ritual, which some of the team members who had attended the workshop had also heard about in seminars with the African Traditional chiefs. There was another discussion about the influence of the missionaries, which has permeated African society to the point where there are no questions as to why certain rituals are performed. There was an instance during one of the seminars with one of the chiefs when one participant complained about certain “petty, petty” things about chieftaincy that bothered her. When pressed further by the chief, she could not put a finger on what those petty things were, but continued to say that those things were preventing her from supporting chieftaincy – which sadly enough is part of her culture. The site team also discussed the fact that many African scholars and their contributions have not been acknowledged, simply because they are Africans. For example, the concept of Trinity was initially put forth by St Augustine, who was an African bishop.

Further, the discussion touched on the fact that the mainstream churches were not following what Jesus said in Matthew 10:5 -16:

- 5 These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions:
"Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans.
- 6 Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel.
- 7 As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.'
- 8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy,[b](#)drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.
9. Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts;
10. Take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals

- or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep.
- 11 "Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave.
 - 12 As you enter the home, give it your greeting.
 - 13 If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you.
 - 14 If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town.
 - 15 I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the Day of Judgment than for that town.
 - 16 I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves."

When Jesus gave his disciples this charge, it directed them to perform miracles, but this is not happening in our times now. The disciples were to set an example – "Listen to what I say and do – that is the foundation. If you are one with God, you will be doing greater things than you thought were possible."

In order to investigate the differences between *Onyamesom* (worship of God) and *Kristosom* (Christian worship), I will seek to make connections between them as part of a larger effort to deepen the process of inculturation of the Christian Faith. I will concentrate on two groups:

- 1) In Ghana, those who practice the African Tradition and who identify themselves as Ghanaian Christian Presbyterians; and,
- 2) In the Diaspora, Ghanaian immigrants and the African-American community who are ready to accept what Africans can bring to the Christian experience.

In the African tradition, festivals are for the release of troubles – everyone has the right to bare their feelings in the form of a song. During the ritual week, everybody unburdens their *sunsum*/soul and begins a regeneration called *Apo* or *Apor* – everyone is

regenerated. Ritual is necessary in order to put the old issues behind, and start a new year. The priests sprinkle water on everyone, cleansing them²⁴⁹.

During numerous trips home, I became close to two traditional chiefs who were earlier acquaintances, close to me in age, who are devout Christians. One is the chief of my hometown, Akropong and the other is the chief of Mamfe; the town which celebrates the Asafosa Ritual. In conducting some of the earlier NYTS workshops on Christianity and African culture in my hometown, I invited the two chiefs to participate, because they are Christians and I felt their input was very important.

The two chiefs have often found themselves at odds with the church establishment, and in the last workshop held in December, 2007/January, 2008, we offered to sponsor a dialogue between the chiefs and the church. Even though the chiefs showed up, the church did not send a representative. During the discussion, it was discovered that the youth and the church have a negative perception of some aspects of the African Tradition. Youth who were present asked for explanations regarding certain rituals that were performed prior to different seasons and festivals.

In response, the chiefs stated that the youth have been given many opportunities to understand what goes on at the palaces; and yet no church youth have ever presented themselves to listen, because they have been indoctrinated by the church to believe that it is not Christian. In other words, the very people who should know what goes on are refusing to hear, yet persist in denigrating traditions they do not fully understand. The church has also refused to include certain groups of the township in Christian worship because of their activities. Shouldn't the church be inclusive, so that they may educate

²⁴⁹Conversations with Professor Kofi Asare Opoku.

the non-believers as to what and who God is, and to bring those who are lost back to the fold? This is why I believe it is necessary to have an inclusive dialogue that will educate the whole community regarding the values that the African tradition brings to humanity.

Christianity, which was foreign to the African Traditional Religion, was presented by the missionaries as if both could not coexist. Why can't one be a Christian and believe in the African tradition? Africans call on their ancestors, especially when they have gatherings. So did Jesus when, on several occasions, He called on His ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and David. Why was that different?

The Asafosa Peace Ritual/Festival and The Holy Communion

Although I knew about the festival of the Mamfe Township, it was during the last workshop that the chief of Mamfe presented the Asafosa Ritual, which is part of a yearly festival Ohum, celebrated by the community in January, as an example of an African tradition which is not understood by Christians. The Chief went on to explain that the ritual, which is part of the Ohum festival, occurs at the latter part of the festival, and it functions to promote peace in the community. The Asafosa Ritual for Peace in the Mamfe Township predates the introduction of Christianity. The people of Mamfe realized that they needed guidance in their community, and so they sought the protection of an intercessor spirit to help them achieve tranquility throughout the year. This yearly ritual is part of the festival which starts in the second week of January and lasts about four days, during which people from the community travel from far and wide to celebrate. The actual festival celebration always begins on a Thursday, and culminates with the Asafosa Ritual on Sunday²⁵⁰. The ritual follows this pattern:

A large community pot is set in front of the chief's palace. Starting on Thursday, the heads of all the family clans of Mamfe bring pots of "palm wine", a local drink tapped from the palm tree, and pour the wine into the community pot. However, if there is a feud within any clan/family, that dispute/feud must be settled before participating in the Asafosa Ritual. If the feud is not settled, those individuals will not be allowed to participate in the Ritual²⁵¹.

²⁵⁰As told by the Mamfe Chief and his elders at Mamfe in an interview during my research process in April, 2008.

²⁵¹Ibid.

Upon hearing the details, I was amazed because I realized it sounded just like something Jesus said in Matthew 5: 23-24:

So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go first be reconciled to your brother and sister, and then come and offer your gift.....”

What other rituals and sacraments are there in the Bible that parallel African rituals? I chose to concentrate on the Christian Holy Communion because of its symbolism.

What is Holy Communion? Holy Communion, also referred to as the Eucharist, is a sacrament.²⁵² The Eucharist commemorates the meals of Jesus during his earthly life and after his resurrection, as a sign of the Kingdom. What does Holy Communion/Eucharist mean? The Eucharist according to the World Council of Churches is essentially the sacrament of the gift which God makes to us in Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Peace exists in the lifetime of everyone. You do not share a meal with your enemy; when you break bread with your enemy, it means you are both ready to make peace.²⁵³

In reconciliation, if you do not forget yesterday’s problem, you may not have anyone to play with²⁵⁴. You have to move on and free yourself to achieve internal freedom that brings happiness because you are free from all burdens. There is an Akan (African) practice in which, when your neighbor visits you, the first thing you do before welcoming him is to give him a glass of water. Water signifies peace, and with peace,

²⁵² <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/faith-and-order-com>, 7.

²⁵³ Conversations with Professor Kofi Asare Opoku.

²⁵⁴ An Akan proverb.

there is a way to realize truth. “Truth is like a baobab tree”, it leads to openness and avoidance of conflicts²⁵⁵. In matters of truth, no single religion exhausts all there is to know about God, and when we claim absolute truth as our possession and despise others then we discredit God. When we recognize that others also have the truth, we are ready to build bridges and not walls.²⁵⁶ Passover was meaningful to the Jews during the time of Jesus Christ, just as the Asafosa Ritual still has meaning to the people of Mamfe in their relationship with God.

The History of the Asafosa Peace Ritual (APC)

The Asafosa Peace Ritual is closely tied to the history of Mamfe Township, in the Akuapem District in the Eastern Region of Ghana, West Africa. According to Oral Tradition, the people of Mamfe used to live at Damurukuso, located near present day Obosomase in the Akuapem District in 1511. In those days, the people of Mamfe were farmers who lived in the forest and could easily be killed by wild animals. There was a lack of water at their location. The hunters of the tribe would go far and wide to search for water, because sometimes they would bring in a kill, but lack water with which to cook it.

The Asamoah family were said to be expert hunters, and it was during one of their hunting expeditions from Damurukuso that they saw rivers and streams flowing from a big rock – water in abundance -- in the area. They returned often, and soon realized that the rivers and streams in the area flowed continuously. They discovered other sources of water not far from the original discovery, and when they realized that the soil was good

²⁵⁵ Conversations with Professor Kofi Asare Opoku.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

for farming, they decided to inform the other four families about what they had found.

The heads of the other families, namely Kwadwo Toku, Abe, Agyarko and Akote decided to go and see the land for themselves prior to making the decision to move. After visiting the location, they agreed with Asamoah that it would be better to relocate.

After discussion with their families, five of the families decided to move and make a home at the new location. The five families that settled at the present day Mamfe Township were Kwadwo Toku, Abe, Asamoah, Agyarko and Akote. They never went back to Damurukuso. The five families parceled out lands for each other, settling not too far from each other, but far enough to feel separate. Each farmer and his family lived in a particular area and farmed the land, but shared the use of essentials such as water and grazing land. By the end of the first year, they realized that they had made a good choice, and therefore called the area Kwaade, and the name has remained till today.

In order to live in harmony, the heads of the five families decided to set aside a specific time to settle disputes that had arisen between individuals as well as families, during the first year of their settlement.

On an appointed day, the head of each family was requested to bring a pot of palm wine to a meeting for sharing. To demonstrate that no one bore any ill will toward another, they poured the drinks they had brought in one common pot, and each of the five family heads drank portions of the mixed wine. The remainder was then shared among the members of the five families, accompanied by merry making, to symbolize the togetherness of the families. Every year, they met to socialize and discuss what had happened to their families within the past year, to settle any disputes between clans, sharing sympathy with those who had lost members of their families, and to celebrate any

good news. Every clan head would bring palm wine – a local wine made from the sap of the palm nut tree. After all disputes were settled, everyone would share the drinks they had brought together and would also share festive together. This demonstration of togetherness was called “*ASAFOSA NOM DA.*” The name means clan drinking day, or the day of communal drinking.²⁵⁷

This tradition continued for several years. At every meeting, some of the hunters began to report seeing an apparition: a very tall man with a big white dog standing in front of him. The man held a staff in his hand, but did not harm the people. Several hunters reported seeing this apparition at many meetings, until a daughter of one of the families became possessed by the spirit of the apparition. The spirit said that his name is Kwadwo Topré, and that he was a spirit, not a god. He desired peace and justice, and did not like blood. If the people who had settled on his land kept the peace, he would protect them and make sure no harm came to them. It was said that when someone became got very ill, Topré would appear and put his hand on the person, who would then immediately recover. They began to revere him. Those who became possessed by the spirit of Topré were called Okomfo, and they lived to serve him. The people also built a house for the pastor of Topré.

The pastor of Topré would take the palm wine from the heads of the clans and pour it into the communal pot. The pastor would then mix the drinks together, and taking the first cup of the mixed palm wine, he would pray to *Onyankopong* – God -- and through Topré, ask for protection for the people, as well as peace, prosperity, happiness, long life and good health. After the prayers, the pastor would put the mixed wine in the

²⁵⁷The brochure of the Mamfe Ohum Festival 2007 & the 10th Anniversary of the Enstoolment of Osabarima Ansah Sasraku III, 23

pots of the different clan heads and every member of the clan was to take a drink. This would go on until all the wine in the cauldron was finished.

Through the *obosom*, Topré would warn the people of misfortune, and tell them how to prevent it, so the people of Mamfe grew prosperous. There were a lot of inter-marriages between the original five families, and the community grew. There was a yearly ritual for Topré as well. Prior the Asafosa Peace Ritual, the elders of the town would go to the farm to prepare special wine, and bring offerings to Topré of yams, cocoyam, plantains, tomatoes, drinks, and firewood.

The Topré Okomfo would perform the necessary rites before the Asafosa Peace Ritual and in so doing; they would be silent participants during the ritual. Every year, as they celebrated the festival, the ritual would conclude the celebration. The festival continues every year to this day, and as the community has grown, so has the community pot, which is now similar to a large cauldron. A clan that had not been able to settle all disputes within their family could not partake of the Asafosa Peace Ritual, unless it was understood that by participating in the Peace Ritual the dispute was at an end, and could never be discussed again. By partaking of the ritual, all was forgotten and forgiven.

Prior to the Peace Ritual, there were certain rituals that had to be performed by Topré's pastor. For three weeks before the ritual, there was to be no drumming, no unnecessary noise and no misbehaving. If there was a death in the family, certain rituals needed to be done, but the burial itself would have to wait [this next phrase needs to be clarified] and there was time to plant new yam. The pastor and his elders would go to the farm and as they went, they would form a line, and no one could cross the line. If you happened to be going to the farm around the same time, you would have to wait until

every single one of the entourage had passed. When they were returning to the village, they also formed one line, led by the pastor of Topré. No one was allowed to look back; if you did, you may not live to see the next year.

From there, they went directly for Topré's house, to meet and receive gifts. After receiving the gifts, they went to their homes to bathe, then returned to the house to begin the ritual. The sub-chiefs would meet first and wait for the chief, who is called *Osabarima*. When *Osabarima* was seated, the APR would begin and *Osabarima* would call the heads of the families to pour their wine into the cauldron. The order of the families was as follows:

1. The Mankradohene
2. The Gyasehene
3. The Enyiresihene
4. The Ponehene
5. The Tufuhene

The *Osabarima* was the last to bring his wine to the pot. The Asamoah family did not participate in the bringing of the wine, but did participate in the drinking because they were seen as the ones who had brought the Mamfe family to that settlement. The *Osabarima* mixed the drink, and gave the heads of the families the drink from the communal pot. After the pastor had prayed for the township, everyone drank the wine, just as it is done in Holy Communion. The pastors of Topré became the chiefs or *Osabarima* of Mamfe, because they understood the spirit of the community and its protector, similar to the part played by church ministers today. If a clan could not resolve an issue prior to the APR, they would go to the pastors for resolution. It was a disgrace to

the clan and the families involved if they could not participate in the APR, and so heads of the families would make sure that their disputes were resolved beforehand. Everyone was invited to partake in the APR, including children.

The Current Celebration of the Asafosa Peace Ritual

The schedule of the festival starts on Sunday, and goes on for the rest of the week.

Monday was a day of mourning for the dearly departed the previous year, and so visits were made to all who had experienced death in their family.

Tuesday was a day for feasting. Each family would cook meals and share them with friends and relatives.

Wednesday and Thursday were set aside to discuss issues of development that would enhance the well-being of all families, while the merry-making continued.

Friday was a day of communal labor.

Saturday was the day of the Durbar, when the chief and elders would sit in state.

Sunday was a day for a non-denominational thanksgiving service.

According to the chief (Osabarima) the APR started in the 1600s, before arrival of Christianity in Africa, and is still celebrated today. Ordained Christian Ministers are invited to the APR, and although some ministers, due to their personal beliefs, choose not to attend, there is always a minister who is ready and willing to participate in the APR. No one has said that Christians are not welcome to participate in the APR. To the Mamfe people, Topré was a manifestation of the power of God. Topré cannot be used for evil, and can never be used to curse anyone. The festivities surrounding the APR are known as the *OHUM* Festival of Mamfe, Akuapem.

The present Mamfe is made up of the following clans:

Descendants of Agyarko	– Awurade Kese	- Chiefs of Mamfe
Descendants of Kwadwo Toku	– Awurade Ketewa	- Chiefs of Gyase
Descendants of Akote	- Pone	- Chiefs of Mankrado
Descendants of Abe	- Enyiresi	- Chiefs of Enyirensi
Descendants of Asamoah	- Akyeremade	- Chiefs of Kwahu ²⁵⁸

Passover was meaningful to the Jews during the time of Jesus Christ, we need to remember that Jesus was a Jew when he died, just as the Asafosa Ritual still has meaning to the people of Mamfe in their relationship with God.

²⁵⁸The brochure of the Mamfe Ohum Festival 2007 & the 10th Anniversary of the Enstoolment of Osabarima Ansah Sasraku III, 24

Christian Holy Communion (CHC)/Eucharist

The Church receives the Eucharist as a gift from the Lord. St. Paul wrote: “I have received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said: ‘This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance (*anamnesis*) of me.’” In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying: ‘This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’” (1 Corinthians 11:23-25; Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22: 14-20).

The meals which Jesus is recorded as sharing during his earthly ministry proclaim the nearness of the Kingdom, of which the feeding of the multitude is a sign. In his last meal, the fellowship of the Kingdom was connected with the imminence of Jesus’ suffering. After his Resurrection, the Lord made his presence known to his disciples through the breaking of bread. Thus, the Eucharist continues these meals of Jesus during his earthly life and after his Resurrection, as a sign of the Kingdom.

The Eucharist is essentially the sacrament of the gift which God makes to us in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Every Christian receives this gift of salvation, through Communion in the body and blood of Christ. In the Eucharist meal, in the eating and drinking of the bread and wine, Christ grants Communion with Himself. God himself acts, giving life to the body of Christ, and renewing each member. In accordance with Christ’s promise, each baptized member of the body of Christ receives in the Eucharist the assurance of the forgiveness of sins (Matt 26:28) and the pledge of Eternal Life (John 6:51-58). Although the Eucharist is essentially one complete act, it will be considered here under the following aspects: giving thanks to the Father,

memorial of Christ, invocation of the Spirit, communion of the faithful, meal of the Kingdom.

Communion

Jesus Christ said, “This do in remembrance of me.” (attribution). We regularly celebrate Communion with these words ringing in our ears. Communion is more than a memorial and our continued participation in this powerfully symbolic ceremony, which molds our thinking, gives life to deeply spiritual truths in very concrete ways.

Communion shapes our identity as a people of God, and provides the blessed assurance that we have been redeemed by the blood of the lamb. Believers should share Communion, because it is through Communion that our sins are forgiven. Believers often abstain, probably due to Paul’s warning in 1 Corinthians 11:27-29.:

So if anyone eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily, *that person is guilty of sinning against the body and the blood of the Lord. That is why you should examine yourself before eating the bread and drinking from the cup. For if you eat the bread or drink the cup unworthily, not honoring the body of Christ, you are eating and drinking God’s judgment upon yourself.*”

And when Jesus stated in John 6:53-54:

I assure you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his Blood, You cannot have eternal life within you. But those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life and I will raise them at the last day.”

Jesus’ blood cleanses us from sin, and we need him most when we are guilty of a sin. Communion is a body matter, since we commune as a body and come to the Lord’s Table as a family. 1 Corinthians 10:17 states: “*And we all eat from one loaf, showing that we are one body.*”

Another key ingredient of Communion was the shared meal, in which the loaf and the cup were shared. The Lord's Supper was made up of both potluck dishes and emblems, as in 1 Corinthians 20:22, 33, when this meal was the focal point of the church's weekly experience. (*Acts 20:7*): "*On the first day of the week, we gathered to observe the Lord's Supper.*" The early church communed every single week, and at these meetings they shared Communion - Acts 2:46:

They worshipped together at the Temple each day, met in their homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared *their meals with great joy and generosity.*"

The first Christians broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, so Communion should be celebrated in a joyful way. Taking Communion is about relationships and resolving conflicts. Drink deeply of the cup of forgiveness, and thank God that Christ is coming soon to usher us into the banquet hall where we shall celebrate with all the saints in the body.²⁵⁹ In 1 Corinthians, Paul explains the meaning of the Lord's Supper and how we as Christians are to celebrate this important church ordinance. Christians have been celebrating Communion in one form or the other for the past two thousand years, ever since Christ shared the last supper with his disciples, so when we celebrate Communion, we are joining believers from centuries past in communion with our Lord and Savior. 1 Corinthians 11:23- 24

For this is what the Lord himself said, and I pass it on to you just as I received it. On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took a loaf of bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, he took the cup of wine after supper saying, 'This cup is the new covenant between God

²⁵⁹Matt Mattison, True Grace Ministries, www.auburn.edu.

and you, sealed by the shedding of my blood. Do this in remembrance of me as often as you drink it.' ”

There are two important teachings in the verse:

- 1) The bread represents Christ's body, broken for us, and
- 2) We take the Communion bread to remember Christ.

His body was presented as the ultimate sacrifice for our sins. Communion is a time for confessing our sins and receiving Christ's forgiveness. We should not take a cavalier approach to Communion. It is a time for reflection. So every time we partake of Holy Communion, we should think about the sacrifice Jesus made for us.

Parallels between Asafosa Peace Ritual (APR) and Christian Holy Communion (CHC)

Peace Ritual, Community based-: - The APR is celebrated by the whole township which is made up of different communities. When the communities meet, they bring all their issues to be discussed, such as deaths that have occurred, or any other problems encountered during the year. They also talk about happy issues such as births and marriages, and together, they drink from one pot signifying that they are all one community, living together for the good of the town.

Holy Communion, Community based: - The Christian Holy Communion is celebrated every Sunday by some disciples, and every month by others in various churches. It is also community-based, where the congregation comes together to celebrate the issues of the week. Other issues including deaths and births are also discussed within the church community at that time, the same as in APR.

Peace Ritual, Palm Wine -: - Palm wine is the drink used in the Peace Ritual. Palm wine, also called Palm Toddy or simply Toddy, is an alcoholic beverage created from the sap of various species of trees such as Palmyra Palm, Coconut tree, etc. This drink is particularly common in various parts of Asia and Africa, and goes by different names, such as *Legmi* in Africa. Guests at weddings, birth celebrations, and funeral wakes are served generous amounts. As a token of respect to deceased ancestors, many drinking sessions begin with a small amount of palm wine spilled on the ground ("*Kulosa malafu*" in *Kikongo ya Leta*). Palm wine is enjoyed by men and women, although women usually drink it in less public venues.

Holy Communion, Wine - According to Richard Fuller, "No sphere of American cultural life has displayed more diversity, innovation and passion than religion. There are over

2000 different religious groups in the United States probably due to historic pluralism and the absence of any governmentally established religion and the relative mobility of the population have made it possible for new and experimental forms of religion to develop and expand with astonishing rapidity.”²⁶⁰

From a religious or theological perspective, Protestant, Catholic and Jewish forms of worship, doctrine, and moral codes can be seen as variations of a shared and fairly cohesive tradition. All are steeped in an ancient heritage that associates wine with the worship of God, and with rituals designed to cultivate communal affirmation. The sacred texts of ancient Judaism make clear that wine is a sign of God’s blessing and that humans are to enjoy the “gladdening of the heart” that wine provides (Genesis 27:28), Deuteronomy 7:13, Amos 9:24, 2 Samuel 13:28, Esther 1:10, Ecclesiastes 9:7 and 10:19). Wine was used by Israelite priests to consecrate the altar when making sacrifices to God. Wine has been used to foster a sense of community affiliation at the family’s Sabbath meal, the Seder meal during Passover, the celebration of a Bris and at weddings.²⁶¹

Christians believe that Jesus celebrated his last meal, a Seder dinner that is intimately connected with the ritual use of wine, with his closest disciples on the night before he died. In 1 Corinthians, Paul explains that during the Last Supper, Jesus took a cup of wine and pronounced that “This cup is the new covenant in my blood.” He then commanded his followers to “Do this in remembrances of me.” Christians continue to break bread and drink wine to keep alive the memory of the death and resurrection of Jesus, and to anticipate the arrival of a new Messianic Age. Even more than baptism, this

²⁶⁰ Robert C. Fuller, “Wine, Symbolic Boundary Setting, and American Religious Communities,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64(December 1995) : 497

²⁶¹ Ibid., 499

ceremony was distinctive to the emergent Christian religion and hence critical to the construction of the earliest boundaries separating Christianity from Judaism.²⁶²

Wine has been placed above all other beverages as the substance that most symbolizes the intersection of the secular and sacred. Wine has been the focus of the theological and liturgical changes through which Christianity exhibited a difference from Judaism.

Wine has helped create the kinds of communal affiliations required by new and experimental forms of spirituality. The mental changes induced by drinking wine favor the kind of variation in ideas that is often necessary to embolden individuals to strike out in theological directions that veer away from the established churches. Wine also promotes the formation of novel religious groups by imparting a sense of emotional expansiveness.²⁶³ The distinctive patterns of use and non-use of wine by a wide variety of religious groups provide an additional perspective on the continuing creativity of American culture and the identity creation and boundary setting of American religious communities.²⁶⁴

Peace Ritual: The people of the Mamfe Township believe that before anyone in their community attends the APR, ALL issues that are antagonistic in nature, must be settled before drinking Palm wine mixed from the communal pot. Members of the community, who do not settle their differences, cannot partake of this ritual/drink for that period. When you decide to participate, you agree that all issues you have against anyone

²⁶² Fuller, "Wine, Symbolic Boundary Setting," 499

²⁶³ Ibid. 515

²⁶⁴ Ibid. 514

are be wiped out completely, never to be revisited or discussed again. You come to this Peace Ritual with a clean heart and mind.

The main requirement of the Peace Ritual –compared to the Biblical text of Matthew 5: 23- 25 which is as follows:

23So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, 24leave your gift there before the altar and go first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. 25Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on your way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge and the judge to the guard and you will be thrown into prison.

Jesus broke bread with his betrayer Judas, and Jesus forgave Judas for what he was to do. Thus the Christian Holy Communion is also seen as a peace ritual. You must not partake of Christian Holy Communion with an unclean heart.

The APR is celebrated once a year, during a huge festival where all the townspeople who live elsewhere will congregate in the town of Mamfe for a celebration. All the families get together and meet as a community for this celebration. The celebration lasts a week with a function everyday of the week, beginning on Monday.

As often as you can participate – CHC - Episcopalians celebrate communion every Sunday with bread and wine. Catholics celebrate communion every Sunday, but without wine. Other Christian disciplines celebrate communion at the beginning of every month, and some celebrate without the wine, using non-alcoholic drinks instead. The church community celebrates communion together. Some church communities, valuing communal feeling, built their churches in the circular mode in order to effect a round table where congregants can face each other in their communion celebrations. These churches feel that when they celebrate communion in the round, they celebrate together,

with no one being more special than another, which bring about togetherness and more of unity, sharing together with each other observing everything.

APPENDIX 2

REVEREND DR. FELIX BUSBY

*Carnarsie Reformed Church
1155 E93rd STREET
BROOKLYN, NY 11236*

November 22, 2008

The New York Theological Seminary
475 Riverside Drive
New York, NY


Dear Faculty:

On behalf of the Site Team for Reverend Daniel Nyante, I would like to take this opportunity to inform you of the following:

The Site Team has agreed to the Challenge Statement and the Demonstration project entitled "Onyamesom (Worship of God) and Kristosom (Worship of Christ)" and approves the goals as stated in the Plan of Implementation section.

All the members of the site team are very excited about the demonstration project and we look forward to a successful and exciting end result for Reverend Nyante.

Sincerely,


Rev. Dr. Felix Busby
Chairman of the Site Team

Signed:

Dr. Akweley Massaquoi
Secretary of the Site Team

Rev. Dr. Felix A. Busby

Biography

I was born in Curacao, the Netherlands Antilles, where I graduated in the field of Mechanical Engineering and was employed at the Shell Oil Refinery until I immigrated to New York in 1965.

Prior to accepting the call to Pastor the Canarsie Community Reformed church, I attended the New York Theological Seminary and was a graduate of the class of 1994.

After having the urge to further my education, I enrolled in the Doctoral program at the Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary and was a graduate of the class of 2006. The purpose of my project was primarily to provide a means for spiritual transformation for the members of the church by beginning with the practice of Solitude and Silence. I am still pursuing publishing my project titled, 'Transformed Life in the Spirit: Solitude and Silence in the Life of the Christian Believer.'

I am looking forward to working with the Reverend Daniel Nyante.

“Onyamesom (Worship of God) and Kristosom (Worship of Christ)”

By

Daniel T. Nyante

Excellent

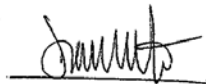
Submitted to
New York Theological Seminary
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry
November 24, 2008

Challenge Statement

The early Christian Movement in Ghana presented the native festivals and rituals of Onyamesom as antithetical to the Christian faith. As a pastor, I have noticed that the congregations of Akropong Christ Church in Ghana and Bethel Presbyterian Reformed Church of Brooklyn, New York have a disdain for such celebrations. This project will investigate the similarities between Onyamesom and Kristosom, draw strength from both and seek to deepen the Christian faith of the congregations.

DRAFT:



Dec 1, 2008

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“Onyamesom (Worship of God) and Kristosom (Worship of Christ)”

NEW YORK THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Doctor of Ministry

DANIEL T. NYANTE
November 24, 2008

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INTRODUCTION TO THE SETTING:

Until the story of the “hunt” is told from the point of view of the lion, the story of the “hunt” will always favor the hunter. – An African/Ghanaian proverb

The first inconvertible evidence of European presence in Ghana dates from January 1482.²⁶⁵ They encountered a variety of African Kingdoms some of whom controlled substantial deposits of gold along the coast of Shama. The initial reason for the Europeans landing on the shores of Africa was economic. They did not come to Africa to “save” the heathens; they came to plunder the continent for what they could get that was gold. Christian historians have long “belittled” Christ’s connection to Africa. Not much is written about the African connection in as much as the Israelites were in Egypt for some time.

Evangelism came much later when the Europeans realized that “saving” the ‘heathens’ would be the way to line the coffers of their countries. The roots of Presbyterian missionary go back to the awakening in the Protestant Churches in the eighteenth century.²⁶⁶ The roots of Presbyterianism come from the Basel Mission; the Basel missionaries were trained to go all over the world, going first to Liberia and then the Gold Coast (Ghana). The Basel Mission decided to penetrate inland from the coast in order to both avoid excessive dependence on the European Agency and to reach populations relatively untouched by Europeans.²⁶⁷ Andreas Riis, one of the Basel missionaries, went to Akropong in the Akwapim Mountains in 1835, where it was hoped

²⁶⁵ Senneh, Lamin *West African Christianity- The Religious Impact* (Mary Knoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1983), 21.

²⁶⁶ Ibid. 111.

²⁶⁷ Ibid. 113.

that the climate would prove less inclement. They also opened another station at Aburi in 1847, with the help of West Indian settlers.²⁶⁸

At the African missionary conference at Le Zoute, Belgium in 1926, the participants expressed an unease regarding the caliber of the missionary personnel being sent to Africa and their capacity for sustained impact.²⁶⁹ Kwame Bediako goes on to quote Smith:

Surely the day has gone when the best men could be picked out for India and China and the rest sent to Africa, as if any man or woman were good enough for Africa. The time for amateurs has passed-if it ever existed. Nothing is too good for Africa. (Smith, E.W., 1926:46)²⁷⁰

The Europeans were met with openness, hospitality and trust – qualities that still exist in Ghanaians today. The local people were excited to see people who were different than they were. When the Europeans came with their new attractions such as their way of dressing, way of life, education etc., the people did not look at the effect of the new additions to the society. Most people in Africa are fascinated by anything European (Obroni is the name used to call any white person in our society.) You were deemed to be fortunate if you had the opportunity to “fraternize with Obroni”.

The African converts, were made to believe that the festivals and rituals of the Ghanaians were not of the Bible and so should be shunned. This attitude has been carried on through the ages where some of the people of our generation do not understand the rituals and the meaning behind some activities of our culture. The disdain the Europeans

²⁶⁸ Sanneh, Lamin *West African Christianity- The Religious Impact* (Mary Knoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1983) 113.

²⁶⁹ Bediako, Kwame *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa, History and Experience* (Mary knoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004) 4.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

had on the native Ghanaian rituals and festivals has rubbed off on our fellow-Ghanaian Christians. Negative attitudes and comments about these rituals and festivals have resulted in my search for an understanding of some of these rituals. Upon exposure to the Asafosa Peace Ritual, I decided to explore the parallels between the Peace Ritual and the Holy Communion. I found that there were several African Traditional Rituals that had parallels in the Bible. These rituals -- and festivals -- go way back before the missionaries came to the Gold Coast.

Two of these rituals/festivals are:

1) the tradition of Odor Adidi (Love fest/Love Feast) – which is similar to the sharing of food at the Sermon on the Mount, and

2) the Asafosa Peace Ritual which is similar to the Last Supper and celebrated as the Holy Communion.

Onyamesom – The Worship of God

“A close observation of Africa and its societies will reveal that religion is at the root of African culture and is the determining principle of African Life. It is no exaggeration, therefore, to say that in traditional Africa, religion is life and life, religion.²⁷¹ In the African Traditional Religion²⁷², God, or the Supreme Being, is outside the pantheon of gods, as he is the eternal Creator of all the other gods and of men and the universe. This makes Him absolutely unique, and He is differentiated from the other

²⁷¹ Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion*, 1.

²⁷² Ghanaian Traditional Religion, Traditional Religion and Traditional African Religion these three titles will be used interchangeably to refer to African Traditional Religion.

gods by having a special name such as Onyame – the Supreme Being, God the Creator of all things, the Deity.²⁷³

In the Ghanaian Traditional Religion, Onyamesom is the worship of God which dates back before the missionaries first set foot on the Continent of Africa. Akan is the dominant culture in the Ghanaian community. Most people in Ghana speak Akan more than any other language. “Onyame” is God in the Akan language and “som” is worship in the Akan language. Onyamesom is a form of worship which our great ancestors relied upon to show their reverence to God. It is not a written guideline, but a way of life which is not restrictive, in that, you can worship God in your kitchen, market or farm. When you meet someone in Ghana and you ask how they are doing; their automatic answer is by the Grace of God – Onyame adom. You hear this everywhere, the church, at the riverside, the graveyard, anywhere and everywhere.

The Tradition Religions have been given several names and according to Peter Sarpong, a Ghanaian Catholic Archbishop, the role of traditional religion in determining the way of life has been vital. African cultures are known for their religious orientation. In fact, African cultures are religious cultures; just as Christianity is a culture, so is African Traditional religion a culture of its people. The culture shapes the religion of the people. We have to know the past in order to understand the present and are better equipped to plan the future. We cannot know the past of the African if we neglect his religion.²⁷⁴

²⁷³ Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion*, 15.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 1

Traditional religion is part of the African's ethos and an understanding of it should go hand in hand with Christian evangelization. The missionaries should have taken time to understand the African culture to know how best to convert the Africans into Christianity through inculturation but they were in too much of a hurry. Unfortunately, traditional religion which should be employed for its potentially salutary effect has been misunderstood and is still misrepresented. The misconception is amply evident from the many wrong names by which traditional religion has been described, i.e. pagan, fetishistic, etc. It is difficult to understand the tenacity with which traditional religion has been termed a primal religion. In Ghana, an Ashanti without hesitation, can, indicate Okomfo Anokye as the source of most of the religious injunctions of the ancient kingdom. Without trying to sound too simplistic, it can be argued that all religions are built on three major pillars: faith, morality and worship. Religion deals with belief in some higher power or being that is accepted as having some influence on devotees.²⁷⁵

Traditional Religion does not tamper with the spoken word. Ceremonies of vital importance such as enstoolment of a chief, the marriage rite, the initiation of a priest or a youth into a secret society, the commissioning of a warrior, are all performed with ritual and words; nothing is written down. Traditional religion has a message for us here. Its lack of scripture has not, in any way, meant lack of effectiveness.²⁷⁶

Just as there were no founders of Traditional Religion, there have been no reformers, preachers or missionaries to change it, improve it or export it to other

²⁷⁵ Sarpong, "Growth or Decay," 189-206.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

countries. The changes that have affected Traditional Religion have sprung up out of the historical changes in the lives of the people concerned.²⁷⁷

The Bible is the sacred book of Christianity, and the Koran is the book of Islam. Traditional religion has no scriptures or holy books. It is written in the history, the hearts and experiences of the people. Having no sacred scriptures, it has been able to move with the times and it has produced no religious controversies. People are free to hold different views and beliefs without the danger of being accused of heresy or falsehood. But on the other hand, because there is no written word, it is difficult to tell what Traditional Religion stood for some 500 years ago.²⁷⁸ African Traditional religion is not written but the spirituality of the people made it easier for them to accept Christianity.

The disdain the European missionaries who preached Christianity had for Traditional Religion and the native Ghanaian festivals and rituals has rubbed off on contemporary Ghanaian Christian congregations. According to Kwame Bediako, Gairdner wrote in 1910 that “The common western missionary view of traditional religion was that it formed ‘the religious beliefs of more or less backward and degraded peoples all over the world, (Gairdner, 1910:139) and that it held ‘no preparation for Christianity’”.²⁷⁹ The negative comments about these festivals and rituals that I’ve heard in the churches I attend in both Ghana and the United States has resulted in my search for an understanding of some of these festivals and rituals.

²⁷⁷ Mbiti, John *Introduction to African Religion*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1991), 17.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Bediako, Kwame *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa, History and Experience* (Mary Knoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004), 21.

Upon exposure to the Asafosa Peace Ritual in Ghana, I decided to investigate the similarities between that peace ritual and the Holy Communion to deepen the Christian faith of the Ghanaian Christian congregations. Some of the festivals and rituals of the Ghanaian traditions dating back before the missionaries came to the Gold Coast have parallels in the Bible. Two of these festivals and rituals are:

- 1) The Asafosa Peace Ritual which is similar to the Last Supper and celebrated as the Holy Communion.
- 2) The tradition of Odor Adidi (Love fest/Love Feast) – which is similar to the sharing of food at the Sermon on the Mount,

Kristosom – Christian Worship

Kristosom (the worship of God through Jesus Christ) is what the Presbyterian Church established when the missionaries first came to my hometown of Akropong in 1828 and set up their mission. This part of town, which is in the Eastern region of Ghana, has been famous for its Presbyterianism; one is known to be honest and blessed for being from that part of town²⁸⁰. One of the prominent churches in Akropong Township is the Christ Church which I have been a member since childhood and I worship there on every visit to Ghana.

The Akropong Christ Church is the most significant Presbyterian Church in the history of the Gold Coast (modern day Ghana). Located where the early Basel Missionaries first started their evangelical work, Christ Church became central to the spread of the gospel and the establishment of the Church. But when the missionaries taught Christianity to my ancestors, they failed to inculturate the Traditional Religion of

²⁸⁰ Noel Smith, *The Churches*, 65.

Onyamesom in some of its festivals and rituals that had been practiced by our ancestors for centuries. It seems the missionaries wanted to replace the festivals and rituals of the African Traditional Religion with Christian festivals and Rituals like, Christmas, Lent, and Easter – just a few of the Christian festivals and rituals, because they did not understand our tradition and culture.

After hearing about the Asafosa Peace Ritual in Ghana, I felt the need to:

- 1) Explore the Traditional Religion further; and
- 2) Investigate the similarities between Onyamesom and Kristosom to deepen the faith of the Christian congregation.

CHALLENGE STATEMENT:

The early Christian Movement in Ghana presented the native festivals and rituals of Onyamesom as antithetical to the Christian faith. As a pastor, I have noticed that the congregations of Akropong Christ Church in Ghana and Bethel Presbyterian Reformed Church of Brooklyn, New York, have a disdain for such celebrations. This project will investigate the similarities between Onyamesom and Kristosom, draw strength from both and seek to deepen the Christian faith of the congregations.

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF CHALLENGE STATEMENT:

During my numerous trips home to Akropong, I developed a close relationship to two chiefs who were earlier acquaintances, about my age group, and who are devout Christians. One is the chief of Akropong and the other is the chief of Mamfe; the town which celebrates the Asafosa Peace Ritual. In conducting some of the earlier NYTS workshops on Christianity and African Culture in my hometown of Akropong, I invited the two chiefs to participate in the program.

The two chiefs sometimes found themselves at odds with the church establishment so we offered to sponsor a dialogue between the chiefs and the church. Even though the chiefs showed up, the church leadership was not represented. During the discussion, it came out that the youth and the church have a negative perception of some aspects of the Tradition. The youth who were present wanted to know how the chiefs felt about certain rituals that were performed prior to different seasons and festivals.

In response, the chiefs explained that the youth have been given many opportunities to understand what goes on at the palaces; and yet none of the youth from the church have ever presented themselves to listen to understand because they have been indoctrinated by the church. This indoctrination took the form of the youth being told by the church leadership that the ritual that goes on in the palace is anti-Christ. In other words, the very people who should know what goes on because they are of the next generation, are refusing to know and understand what goes on; and yet they are out there denigrating traditions they do not fully understand. The church leadership refused to include certain groups in the township because of their activities. Shouldn't the church

be the one to be inclusive so that they may educate the non-believers as to what God is and to bring those who are “lost” – those who have not been saved through Jesus Christ, into the fold?

Christianity, which was foreign to the Traditional Religion, was presented by the missionaries as if both could not coexist. Why can't one be a Christian and believe in the Traditional religion? This is at the heart and soul of my project and why I believe it is necessary to have an inclusive dialogue that will embrace the whole community to the values that the Tradition and Culture brings to humanity.

Members of the site team were excited about this challenge statement and they came up with several good parallels in the scripture that could be found in Traditional Religion. Most of the site team members having been part of the Winterim seminar held at Akropong in January 2008 were part of the discussion with the chiefs. They visited some of the natural habitats and could sense the spirituality in the essence of Traditional Religion. Even in the traditional set up, you are still expected to be morally and spiritually good. There should be no negativity. Kwame Bediako puts it this way: “Yet the view of sin as antisocial is also biblically valid; sin is indeed sin against another person and the community's interest. But human beings are the creation of God, created in God's image, so social sin is also sin against God.”²⁸¹ The discussion centered on spirituality in Traditional Religion and some of the similarities as follows:

“When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and

²⁸¹ Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa*, 26.

dwelt there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation." (Matthew 12: 43-45)

When you repent of your sins and give your life to God, you are filled with His goodness and His mercy. However, if you do not follow his steps and fill your house with his goodness, you will be filled with spirits that do not bode well for you.

“You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You^[a] must be born again.’”⁸ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.” (John 3:7-8)

The site team also held a discussion about the Asafosa Peace Ritual and the spirituality surrounding the ritual and agreed that I should explore and research into the Peace Ritual and the similarities to rituals in the Bible.

So in order to deepen the Christian Faith of the congregations of the Ghanaian Christian churches of New York and Ghana I will investigate the similarities between Onyamesom and Kristosom.

To attain this goal, I will concentrate on two focus groups:

- 1) In Ghana, those who practice the Tradition Religion and who also identify themselves as Ghanaian Christian; and,
- 2) In the Diaspora, Ghanaian Immigrants Christians and the community who are ready to accept what the Traditions can bring to the Christian experience.

PLAN OF IMPLEMENTATION:

Three goals of the project are:

Goal #1

To recruit a team of about 20 Christians from Ghana and the Diaspora who will explore the similarities of Onyamesom and Kristosom, draw strength from both and seek to deepen the Christian faith of the congregations.

Strategy

- 1) Develop the requirements which will be used to recruit team members.
(Site Team – December, 2008)

Evaluation for Strategy 1 – This strategy will be accomplished when I have identified 6 different criteria that will be used to recruit the team.

- 2) Recruitment of the team in the United States who will travel to Ghana in December 2008 (Site team & Rev. Nyante).

Evaluation for Strategy 2 – This strategy will be accomplished when based on the above stated criteria we have identified and recruited 10 persons to be a part of the team.

- 3) Commissioning ceremony at Bethel Reform Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn on December 7, 2008 at 3:00 pm by Rev. Sam Atiemo. At the commissioning ceremony, Rev. Dan Nyante will distribute a travel schedule and journal to each team member to be used in the program.

Evaluation for Strategy 3 – This strategy will be accomplished when 90% of the team have participated in the commissioning ceremony and received a travel schedule and journal from Rev. Daniel Nyante prior to leaving on December 18, 2008 for Ghana.

- 4) Recruit local Ghanaian team members and have a commissioning ceremony by Rev. Daniel Nyante. At the commissioning, each team member will receive a travel schedule and journal to be used in the program. (December 2008)

Evaluation for Strategy 4 – This strategy will be accomplished when 10 persons will have been chosen using the criteria in Strategy 1 of this goal and those persons will have been commissioned.

- 5) Orientation and commissioning of the complete team by Rev. Dan Nyante. (December 2008)

Evaluation for Strategy 5 - This strategy will be accomplished when 90% of the team already recruited, will have a clear understanding of what is expected of him or her and the role of the travel journal in reflecting on the various educational experiences/opportunities.

Goal #2

To raise the awareness of a select group of Ghanaians and Ghanaian Christians in the Diaspora that before Jesus Christ was introduced to our ancestors, they worshipped God through the practice of African Traditional Religion.

Strategy:

- 1) Conduct a workshop to educate the commissioned team on Onyamesom and Kristosom utilizing the travel schedule and journal by Professor Opoku in (December, 2008).

Evaluation for strategy 1 – This strategy will be accomplished when all commissioned team members have an understanding of Onyamesom and Kristosom by answering a questionnaire before and after the workshop.

- 2) Participate in Asafosa Peace Ritual utilizing the travel schedule and journal by Nana Ansah Sasraku III, Chief of Mamfe Township in Ghana. (December, 2008).

Evaluation for strategy 2 – This strategy will be accomplished at a debriefing session which will occur the day after the ritual utilizing the travel schedule and journal.

- 3) Participate in Church Worship and the Christian Holy Communion (CHC) at Christ Church in Ghana; utilizing the travel schedule and journal by Pastor of Christ Church Akropong. (January, 2009).

Evaluation for strategy 3 – This strategy will be accomplished by having a debriefing session which will occur after the church service using the travel schedule and journal.

- 4) A visit to the Akonnedi Shrine in Larteh, Akuapem by Professor Opoku. (December, 2008)

Evaluation for strategy 4 – This strategy will be accomplished at a debriefing session which will be held with the team members after the visit to the shrine utilizing the travel schedule and journal.

- 5) Experience a Ghanaian wedding celebration with Professor Opoku. (December, 2008)

Evaluation for strategy 5 – This strategy will be evaluated by the team members by comparing this experience with what they experience in the United States utilizing the travel schedule and journal.

- 6) Continue the dialogue with the commissioned team to develop a liturgy for the congregation from what has been learned by the Commissioned Team. (January – March, 2009)

Evaluation for strategy 6 – This strategy will be accomplished when a comprehensive liturgy has been produced utilizing the travel schedule and journal.

Goal #3

Develop the Institute for Diasporan and African Culture (TIDAC) for the purpose of building a stronger connection between the Ghanaian Community in the Diaspora, Ghanaian Christians in Ghana.

Strategy:

- 1) Inaugurate The Institute for Diasporan and African Culture at Akropong. (December, 2008).

Evaluation for Strategy 1 – This strategy will be accomplished when the inauguration actually takes place at Akropong.

- 2) Develop and train Board of Directors for the Institute by the Chairman of the Board. (January – March, 2009)

Evaluation for Strategy 2 – This strategy will be accomplished when the members of the Board of Directors have been identified and a training session scheduled for them either in Ghana or in New York, USA.

3. Create a mission statement for the Institute by the Commissioned Team. (January – March, 2009)

Evaluation for Strategy 3 – This strategy will be accomplished when the new Board agrees on the mission of the Institute and a Mission statement for the Institute is issued.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

My research will be in the form of direct personal interviews, observations as well as utilizing the print media. I will specifically use books written by both renowned and unrenowned African theologians and well as theologians whose work has a direct impact on my project. To be current, I also intend to use the research facilities of several institutions. I will also include works from biblical studies as well as social theory. The research questions will be as follows:

- 1. Historical:** What understanding did the Europeans have about the Ghanaian Tradition, festivals and rituals?
- 2. Theological:** What is the theology of the Christian Holy Communion?
- 3. Educational:** How is Christianity impacting the African/Ghanaian culture today?

EVALUATION PROCESS:

There will be an assessment of the project and an evaluation by the Commissioned Team. Assessment tools will also be utilized as well as analytical tools such as quantitative and qualitative analyses. The signs by which the Team will know the Goals have been achieved will be by having 10 people who witnessed the program give a testimony of the similarities between the Peace ritual and the Christian holy communion. There will be an analysis and questionnaires for the attendees to answer and this will also form a basis for the evaluation.

The evaluation process will be as follows:

1. The Commissioned Team will be asked to perform the evaluation.
2. The criterion for the evaluation will be:
 - i. to have a third of my audience to have an understanding at the conclusion of the project what the Asafosa Peace Ritual and the Christian Holy Communion stand for;
 - ii. that one can be a Christian and also have a strong belief in the Ghanaian Traditional religion, because it is part of our culture.

MINISTERIAL COMPETENCIES:

The Site Team and I discussed the different competencies. The process used was as follows: each competency was discussed in relation to the candidate as to whether it was relevant to the candidate or not at the point of his ministry. Some competencies were dismissed out of hand as not being relevant whereas other competencies warranted a lot of discussion. The discussions were in relation to the challenge statement and the bearing it will have on the research project but most importantly if the research project will hone the competencies chosen. The ministerial competencies the Site Team and I decided upon are as follows:

Prophetic Agent:

Being a prophetic agent will be an agent of change. My mentor who I believe to be an ideal prophetic agent is the late Kwame Bediako. He is the one I would like to emulate and I will read up on his life work to give me a sense of direction as to where I should go. The commitment to the transformation of the world is very important to this project. I am seeking to change the minds of Christians about what has been told to them about the African Traditional Religion being antithetical to Christianity. I would like them to know that it is possible for the two to co-exist. I would like to find out more information about the African Traditional Religion and be prophetic by raising awareness of Ghanaians and by bringing/leading my brothers and sisters home and to teach them about the African Tradition and culture.

Ecumenist:

To be in ministry in today's world is to be an ecumenist. To develop this skill, I will learn more about other faiths and religions of this world and try to build a cohesive community around me. The world has become very global in its setting and as a minister, I have to be knowledgeable and have a healthy amount of appreciation of other denominational, confessional, cultural and religious traditions. My project can be called ecumenical because it seeks to educate Christians of the African culture. The Institute will foster dialogue and understanding across denominational, confessional, cultural and religious lines. In my ministry, I will strive to provide structured opportunities for interdenominational, multicultural, and multi-faith worship, education and action. The congregational needs, concerns and community development of other groups and congregations will be of utmost importance to my ministry because it will directly impact on the goals of my ministry. I will also attempt to educate my community about proselytism and bring up the histories of conflicts, oppression and violence in a way that we can learn from them and do better in our inter-relations of the different faiths.

Administrator/Leader:

In my discussions with the Site Team, the decision was made to put these two competencies together. To be an effective leader, one must be a good administrator and so we decided to address these competencies as one. I will develop my skills as a communicator by making and delivering clear and concise decisions. As an administrator, it will be important for me to have clarity and to be succinct in my analysis of any situation I am presented with. I will work on bringing clarity to my decisions and forging a clear sense of direction to my team. I will have to establish realistic goals that

my community and I can attain. This project will assist me to hone in my capability of developing an inclusive decision-making style. I should be able to hopefully identify and make use of personal and material resources of my congregation, organization and community. This project will help me understand group processes and dynamics and sharpen my ability to work with them. This project will also help improve my ability to delegate and through the various tasks that are a part of the mission, I will be able to strengthen my skills. I should be able to polish my ability to handle details with precision, accuracy, efficiency and organization as well as sharpen my skills of maintaining effective lines of communication.

As a leader, I should be willing to learn from others and be humbled by their knowledge and my lack of it. The reason why we believed that the two competencies belong together is that an administrator should have the ability to communicate an overall sense of direction and to enable others to accomplish it – just as a leader should. As a leader, I will sharpen my skills of having the willingness and abilities to take initiatives and to delegate where necessary. My respect for talents and abilities of others continues to grow everyday and I believe will continue to grow with this project. I have always been open to constructive criticism and this project will sharpen my ability to give it back. I will be able to motivate others to bring out the best in them and acknowledge their input. As I have learned from Professor Opoku, a renowned Theologian knowledge is like a baobab tree and so should be shared. With that in mind, I will share the knowledge I gain through the publications printed in association with the Institute so that others may be enlightened.

APPENDIX 3

Goal 1

To recruit a team of about 20 Christians from Ghana and the Diaspora who will explore the similarities of Onyamesom and Kristosom, draw strength from both, and seek to deepen the Christian faith of their congregations.

Strategy

Develop the requirements which will be used to recruit team members. (Site Team – December, 2008)

In order for the requirements to have legitimacy, it was necessary to set up requirements for the members of the team. The members of the team would be serving as witnesses to the demonstration project and so the set of requirements was the first step in getting a team together.

Criteria to qualify as a team member are as follows:

Age - in order to have a broad spectrum of view, the minimum age was set at eighteen with no maximum age. The age of eighteen was because it was necessary to have team members who are old and mature enough to be independent thinkers, and to be able to utilize the travel journal which would be provided to all team members.

Employment & good health - Team members had to be in good health because the schedule for the demonstration project was full, and it was important that all team members participate in all the activities as scheduled. The employment aspect was also important for legitimacy. It was necessary that the team members be gainfully employed, since the assumption should not be made that any team members are going along with the program for monetary gain.

Must be matured - It was important for the team members to be mature. Maturity is the period of time in your life after your physical growth has stopped and you are fully

developed state of being mature; full development. Maturity in this case refers to maturity in mind and reasoning.

Intellectual ability to reason logically- This comes with the mature sense of reasoning, and having the ability to make decisions through the art of deduction. Some characteristics of a person with intellectual ability is as follows: an avid reader, provides very alert, rapid answers to questions, has a wide range of interests, is secure emotionally, is venturesome, wanting to do new things, needs little outside control - applies self discipline, is resourceful - solving problems by ingenious methods, is creative in new ideas, seeing associations, has the capacity to look into things and be puzzled, is involved with many exploratory type activities, reveals originality in oral and written expression, is perceptually open to his or her environment, displays a willingness to accept complexity, and is independent.

Interest in African Traditional Religion with no bias -- There are many negative connotations about the African Traditional Religion (ATR) and so it was important for the team members either a) to have no knowledge of ATR or b) have an interest in increasing their knowledge about ATR.

Concern about religiosity -- The team members had to have the numerous aspects of religious activity, dedication, and belief (religious doctrine.) In its narrowest sense, religiosity deals more with how religious a person is, and less with how a person is religious (in terms of practicing certain rituals, retelling certain myths, revering certain symbols, or accepting certain doctrines about deities and afterlife). Team members had to have an interest in religion, and to have questions and concerns about the future of religion.

Interest in Africa and African Culture

It was important to have team members who are interested in knowing more about Africa and the culture of Africa, so that there will be a genuine feeling of achievement when witnessing a cultural event.

Evaluation for Strategy 1 –In order of importance, an interest in Africa, African culture and African Traditional Religion was of utmost importance followed by the intellectual ability to reason logically. This strategy was accomplished because selected team members all had an interest in the purpose of the trip. This interest was exhibited by their participation in all the activities, and the dedication they showed by leaving in the early hours of the morning to take particular trips for the program on the project.

Conclusion: – At the end of this specific strategy we felt that based on the participation and the effort of each and every team member exhibited, this strategy was accomplished.

It was necessary to recruit a team to serve as witnesses to the program. The recruitment of the team A was from a group of Christians, both African American and Ghanaian who were willing to take the trip to Ghana to witness the ritual. Recruitment of team B was from Ghana who were willing to explore the similarities of Onyamesom and Kristosom and draw strength from both, and seek to deepen the Christian faith of the congregations.

It was also necessary to develop requirements to be used to recruit the team members; because consistency of thought and mindset was needed for this demonstration project. Thus out of the requirements grew criteria which were used to recruit the team. These criteria were used to select the team members. The same criteria were used to recruit the team in the United States who traveled to Ghana in December 2008 (Site team

& Rev. Nyante). It was important for the team members to have a clear understanding of the objectives. It was necessary for the team to be recruited to have the following:

1. Interest in a religious mission for the benefit of the community
2. Objectivity to be able to appreciate the merits of the mission
3. Ability to keep issues on an impersonal level.
4. The ability to critically analyze different points of view

The criteria developed for the requirements to recruit the team members, also had these in-built fulfillment of the objectives listed above; so this strategy was accomplished.

Recruitment of the team in the United States who will travel to Ghana in December 2008
(Site team & Rev. Nyante)

Evaluation for Strategy 2 – This strategy will be accomplished when based on the above stated criteria we have identified and recruited 10 persons to be a part of the team.

Strategy accomplished.

The commissioning ceremony at Bethel Reformed Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn on December 7, 2008 at 3:00 pm by Rev. Sam Atiemo. At the commissioning ceremony, Rev. Dan Nyante distributed a travel schedule and journal to each team member to be used in the program prior to leaving on December 18, 2008 for Ghana. The following are the attendees at the commissioning ceremony:

1. Rev. Samuel Atiemo - Pastor - Bethel Presbyterian Church, Brooklyn
2. Rev. Dr. Felix Busby - Pastor - Canarsie Reformed Church
3. Wanda Lundy - Adjunct Professor of New York Theological Seminary
4. Curtis Lundy - Musician, husband of Dr. Wanda Lundy
5. Kirk Lyons - Pentecostal Minister and Adjunct professor at Union

a. Theological seminary

6. Eva Shaw-Taylor - D. Min student at NYTS
7. Nina Smith - Member - St. Christopher's Episcopal Church, Maryland
8. Alyson Smith - Member - St. Christopher's Episcopal Church, Maryland
9. Kwasi Nyante - Member of Bethel Presbyterian Reformed Church
10. Kwaku Nyante - Member of Bethel Presbyterian Reformed Church
11. Isaac Mensah - Elder of Bethel Presbyterian Reformed Church
12. Love Mensah - Deacon of Bethel Presbyterian Reformed Church

The members were identified by Rev. Nyante and commissioned by Reverend Busby, Pastor of Canarsie Reformed Church. The group was then given a charge by Rev. Samuel Atiemo to go with open minds and hearts on this trip. The full team was to be commissioned again at Akropong in Ghana by Rev. Nyante.

Evaluation of Strategy 3: This strategy was accomplished because 90% of the team members participated in the commissioning ceremony and received the travel schedule and journal from Rev. Daniel Nyante prior to leaving on December 18, 2008 for Ghana.

Travel to Ghana

Rev. Nyante left early to make preparation for the group visit to Ghana. Both groups were recruited with the same requirements used for the group from the United States. The second group arrived in Ghana on the 19th of December, 2008.

Orientation and commissioning of the complete team was performed by Rev. Dan Nyante. At the commissioning, each team member received a travel schedule and journal to be used in the program. (December 2008).

The local Ghanaian team and the US team joined together for the commissioning at Akropong. The local team members were made up of people from the following faiths: Muslim, Jehovah's Witness, Presbyterian and Methodist. There were five team members who were follows:

1. Hazara Mohammed - Muslim, 2nd Year student, University of Ghana Legon
2. Joyce Boham - Methodist Church of Ghana
3. Mercy Oduyoye - Methodist Church of Ghana
4. Jeremiah Mensah - Methodist Church of Ghana
5. Christine Mensah - Catholic turned Jehovah's Witness
6. Mr. Oware - Grace Presbyterian Church, Akropong

The commissioning took place on December 20, 2008 at Akropong in Ghana. Members of the local team joined members of the United States team and the commissioning was performed by Rev. Daniel Nyante. All team members were provided with a participant journal to record their observations of the activities they witnessed. Rev. Nyante addressed the group and opened the proceedings with a prayer, and then he handed out the commissioning paper, goals of the project and travel journals to all the team members.

He also gave team members, the reason behind the travel journal as well as when he wanted to receive the travel journals - after each event. The next step was to recite the commissioning statement. After the team members read the statement, Rev. Nyante gave the charge to the team to go out, observe and provide feedback. Rev. Nyante went over the challenge statement, the goals and the schedule. Rev. Nyante felt uncomfortable with the visit to the shrine and so he decided to take it out of the schedule due to pressure and

advice from other factions. Rev. Wanda Lundy and Kirk Lyons insisted that the visit to the shrine was important and so Rev. Nyante reluctantly gave in to the visit. The commissioning ended with a prayer by Kirk Lyons.

At the commissioning the following questions were asked and statements made by the team members asked questions:

Why are you limiting the dissemination of the project to only Ghanaians in the Diaspora and not all Africans? - Prof. Opoku

The demo - worship of God worship of Christ - cannot just be limited this to ATR and Christianity. Write up focused on Christianity and African Traditional Religion –

Prof. Mercy - The Muslims have the same history as Christians and ATR. Should include the Muslims from the start as opposed to bringing the Muslims in after the fact. How will you explain the presence of one Muslim person in the team?

The project/Institute will have to examine the impact of the Muslim faith on the Ghanaian culture - within the larger framework of the Institute.

The students who are part of the project are they here? Have to pick up on that piece and respond to it. Have to be narrow or you will never finish.

Is Onyamesom as developed as Christianity?

That is what the research is about - trying to find out what is out there. Does not have a set of propositions. It is an informal religion, you are born into it - it is open - help us to establish the parameters for Onyamesom.

Language problem - negative portrayal of the ATR - the word by which everyone goes by is Abosomsom - you will have to defend of Onyamesom that ATR is the worship of what is valuable to you but not the worship of stones. The very idea that someone was worshipping a stone. Will have to defend the language - What are the specifics? State this clearly in the proposal.

Prof. Opoku: The heathen in his blindness bows down to wood and stone.

Thanked Prof. Mercy, Opoku, and Wanda - Prof. Wanda - thanked Rev. Nyante and stated that the time is now - for him to have the courage to do what he has to do.

The preacher said there were certain places we should not go, like to a herbalist. They are scared that the charismatic churches are like the ATR practitioners.

Were the missionaries asked to come here? Were they invited? Why did they come here?

What if people from my country had come to their country? They believe that they were sent - Matthew 28 - they will be in Beijing.

The Peace Ritual was to occur the next day, so the group went over the schedule.

Jeremiah Mensah:

On December 20, 2008 all the recruit team members from Ghana and United States met at Akropong for Orientation and Commissioning of the Institute for Diaspora and African Culture (TIDAC.) Each member received a Travel Schedule and Journal that would be used in the program. After the distribution of the travel journal, one of the professors who are also a priest prayed for God's blessing and guidance throughout the program. Rev. Daniel Nyante led the team in commissioning ceremony. Rev. Nyante also led us to pledge as part of the inauguration of the Institute of Diasporan and African Culture. The team was oriented on the program and the Institute. Rev. Nyante explained the objectives and challenge statement of the Demonstration Project.

He explained the program seeks to identify various differences and similarities between Onyamesom and Kristosom, of the native religion and Christianity respectively and deepen the Christian faith of the congregations. Mamfe festival would be used as a case study. The topic Onyamesom raised several questions as to whether it was too broad. Others suggested Abosomsom should have been appropriate. This pushed Rev Nyante to go further to define Onyamesom. He also explained that TIDAC would be a repository of African culture and literature for both Africans and the Diasporans where they would be educated about the African culture and its importance in the contemporary world. The orientation and commission was completed by Rev. Nyante.

Evaluation for Strategy 4 – This strategy was accomplished because there were more than 10 persons present and after the question and answer session, they had a clear understanding of what was expected of them. 90% of the team already recruited was present and they had a clear understanding of what was expected of him/her and the use of the travel schedule & journal in reflecting their thoughts on the various educational experiences/opportunities.

APPENDIX 4

GOAL TWO – THE JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY

Adesua nyinaa ye nya fi abraha mu nsem (All learning is acquired by experience)

To find out if practitioners of ATR worshipped God even before Jesus Christ was introduced to our ancestors by the missionaries.

Strategy: Chapter 1

7) Conduct a workshop to educate the commissioned team on Onyamesom and Kristosom utilizing the travel schedule and journal by Professor Opoku in (December, 2008). The travel journals of the following participants are enclosed:

Workshop on Onyamesom & Kristosom

The workshop was conducted by Professor Opoku with team members present. It lasted for about 2 hours and several issues were addressed. Each participating team member utilized the travel schedule and journal and at the end of the workshop, the journals were collected.

Evaluation – This strategy was accomplished because each team member handed in their travel journal to the project coordinator for analysis. Enclosed are some of the individual write-ups of travel journals by the following team members: Jeremiah Mensah, Christina Mensah and Hajara Mohammed-Rajai.

Jeremiah Mensah

According to Professor Opoku, one has to realize that knowledge is not just in one person's head, thus one has to get ready to learn other religions, to know and tolerate them, and other than thinking one's religion is superior to the other. Then he gave some proverbs to support the fact:

1. One must come out of one's house to begin learning
2. If you don't go outside your mother's house you will think only your mother's soup is the best.

Such proverbs encourage accommodation, tolerance, respect, openness to other religions and discourage exclusion from the Islamic religion or Christianity. This means that one religion cannot claim sole truth or knowledge. This can be found in all religions, if only one is ready to study it.

Source of scripture or knowledge makes the religion authoritative, not just because it is written. There are many ways of preserving experience and knowledge. Some preserve experiences by writing them down. Others, like African Traditional Religion preserve them in symbols and songs, drumming and dancing, and proverbs. So the mere fact that such experiences are not written does not mean they are not from God. The Adinkra symbols, local names of God, support the fact that African Traditional Religion was mindful of God the Supreme Being. Before the introduction of Christianity for example, traditionalists taught that God (*Nyame*) never dies, this eternal being is enshrined in Adinkra symbols.

The belief in ancestors is also an affirmation of the existence of God. Since the *okra* (soul) is from God, and there is no separation of man and God, the belief that the *okra* exists as an ancestor means that God does not die. *Onyame Dua* is a name of a tree that is used for rituals and cleaning. The name *Onyame Dua* indicates that Africans believe that God exists. The names of the tree and land indicate that the Africans derive their experience and knowledge of God from the environment within which they live. They also express their belief in God through the environment. Another source of knowledge of God is drum language. Indians use OM sound to indicate God while Africans use “*bom*”, from the sound of a heart beat to indicate God. They express it through drumming “*bom, bom*”.

The message [Atumpan drum carry across is path crosses river and river crosses path. Which came first? We made a path or created the path to meet the rivers, then, the rivers from long, long ago Odomankoma.] This text is similar to Psalm 8, which indicates the creative role of God. This idea of God is not foreign; the Africans did not ever know how to read the Psalms. So by merely looking at the creation, our ancestors got to know about God. Okyerema stands for knowledge. He is a historian in the society. They narrate the history of the society through drumming.

Esen, Okyerema and Kwaku kwabrafo are the summary of life. In a chief's court, Esen is the one who keeps order. He shouts "Quiet, listen and pay attention," in the court. According to them, the first thing God created was the Esen. They keep order in the universe, and make sure that the seasons follow each other in order. Rain season, dry season and the semi-rain season are all part of the life cycle. [Ancestors through of beings; there are beings in the environments we can relate to bosumpo. Trees have beings, rivers, fish, animals, human beings and sea – not po.] This is God is seen through our environment.

Kwaku kwabrafo means executioner, or death. Death is part of the rhythm of life. When death occurs, a human being passes away, but eventually comes back to the world. There are many mythologies of death to indicate this. Death means that the person is not dead, but temporarily kept apart. [...wanted come back into the world or the soul is not dead, but part of the world. The fetal position indicates the way one is born into the same way he goes back and would come back in like manner.]

Onyamesom derives from the African world view. Everything in the universe has a beginning through the activities of the Creator. [*Nyame, nzambi, onyambi* according to linguistics means to begin. The Kwa language is spoken in Central and West Africa.

According to Iglov, in Chinese, *shi* means “spirit that creates.” “So if you want to talk to God, speak to the wind”²⁸². God is everywhere, spirit is everywhere. [Chuku – dru-sopins, ku-greater, so if Chuku moves Chuku’s hands off the universe, it would collapse so God is seen as a sustainer. Although there was a clear beginning, there is no clear end, thus no end to the universe. The universe is not run according to anyone’s logic. Everything that has a beginning has an end. The universe has visible and invisible aspects.

Visible aspects of the universe lies within our sensible aspect, one part of Creationism and invisible aspects is not an illusion. There are five forms of orderliness in African Traditional Religion.

1. Order in nature is first observed in blood circulation, rhythm, round trees eyes that are round, houses that are round. This reflects the philosophy of life. Theory indicates symbol of circle – eternity. Ritual dance *Akom* is also performed in a circle; there is also snake with its tail in the mouth. They are all emphasizing circle which means security according to the child. That is why unborn baby in a womb in a circle position and when it comes out of the womb the people represent at the spot also stand in a circle to tell the baby it is secure.
2. A religious order. This is a religious statement. There is no representation of God because God is spirit, and no image can represent him. One cannot reduce God to a shrine, temple objects or statues. Rocks, trees, water are all part of the universe, so they are the temple of God. God resides in them.
3. Moral order is the foundation of the universe. Out of moral order comes our notion of knowing right and wrong. All moral consciousness derives from 9 norms:

²⁸² A Ghanaian proverb spoken by Prof. Opoku.

- a. Relationship between man (parents and sons) parent help you to grow your teeth, then you also help them to lose their teeth.
 - b. A fisherman giving back fish to the sea after catching them is a sign of gratitude.
 - c. Certain days are set aside to ban fishing and farming as sacred days. These are ways to preserve to the environment. A farmer is also encouraged to leave the seeds of palm nuts on the farm for them to germinate. We do not leave this responsibility to the birds; only man is responsible for that.
4. Mystical order – order of mystery in the universe. The knowledge of witchcraft teaches the theory of cause and action. It explains that when bad things happen to people, it is caused by mind. Our culture gives us answers to help us to prevent such, and understand what is difficult comprehend. Order was placed at the foundation of the universe by the creator. Helps people to find reasons to things.
5. Order of beings – the highest being is first, God, then spirits, ancestors, nature, man, objects in nature and lastly, energy force. Some people have the energy to heal, and cause rain to fall. God has control over lower spirits.

Christina Mensah

Professor Opoku said that Africans have something valuable to add to our culture, because Africans knew certain things before the arrival of Christianity and Islam. The missionaries arrived with the idea that our culture is dirty. Now some Africans have realized that we have a rich culture, which we can carry forward.

Professor Opoku gave a lot of myths and proverbs. For instance, he touched on Africans' belief in death and resurrection. He said Africans have to understand death and resurrection based on the banana tree. He said as one banana tree dies, another replaces it. That is how they come to understand death and resurrection.

Adinkra symbols were also discussed. Professor Oduyoye explained that these symbols have something to offer Africans that can enrich our culture. She said Islam and Christianity portray our own African culture as having nothing to offer. So it is now left with the student to investigate and come up with ideas that will help to enrich African

culture, so that our culture will live on through our children. To sum up: African heritage is a God-given one and we need to preserve it.

Hajara Mohammed-Rufai

The lecture started on the basis of some proverbs:

1. One must come out of one's house to begin learning. This means that taking steps away from our familiar surroundings begins the learning process.
2. If you have not been outside of your house, you would not know that your mother's soup is the best.
3. Truth is like a baobab tree, one person's arm cannot embrace it. The Baobab is also known as the upside-down tree. This teaches about truth, knowledge and wisdom. The truth, i.e. the baobab tree, is beyond the grasp of one person.
4. A man without culture is like a zebra without stripes.
5. However big one eye may be, two are always better. This teaches cooperation. It also teaches that two perspectives are better than one. That is explained by another proverb that says: Ti Koro nko agyina (One head does not go into counsel. Two heads are better than one.)
6. Hunt in every forest, for there is wisdom and good hunting in all of them. This encourages us to look everywhere in religious dialogues.

Onyamesom, according to Professor Opoku, is part of everything about the African. The African has no sacred books and no scriptures, but religion encompasses all aspects of life. He says that scripture becomes authoritative and not because it is written, but because of its source. In the case of the African, those religious values are transmitted orally, and an African saying goes: The tongue does not rot. Our African traditional symbols such as the Adinkra have long taught about God, and the eternal nature of the human souls. For instance, the saying "I will only die when God dies." This teaches that the Okra lives eternally. It says that my soul lives as long as God lives, and never dies.

According to Professor Opoku, the cross was not introduced into Africa by Christianity. The people of Africa already used the symbol of the cross in their own mythology. From east to west and from north to south, the cross represents the intersection, thus the path used to create the world. Professor Opoku mentioned that when he dies, he does not want a cross, but instead an Adinkra symbol “Onyame bewu na mawu” represented on his grave, because it communicates eternal life, African Traditional Religion is not necessarily polytheistic, since it is understood that the Great Spirit Onyame/*Oyankupong* has no equal. The belief that death is only a transition, so life does not end with death is firmly rooted in African traditional belief.

Libation: Sharing food, drinks or water is a belief that the dead ancestors continue to live, so they are invited to share in what we do. One will realize that life cycle rituals in Africa, from birth through puberty, marriage and death suggest that life is one huge circle, with the human being at the center, from birth until departure, and continuing on after death. The rituals performed at birth seek to connect the newly born to the living, the dead and the yet to be born.

The discussions on the various clans and their children as totems were insightful. Oyoko clan is said to hold the Hawk dear, due to its swiftness and ferocious nature. The Agona clan has the parrot as totem, an eloquent bird whose sayings are still quoted today. The Asona has the white crow as totem, it is said that it is out of wisdom that its white neck never gets dirty. Asanee - Best known for its diplomacy. Aduana have the dog, due to its cunning. Asakyiri revere the vulture, or eagle, since scavengers are among the few birds said to be protected by God, and so they are not hunted.

The Bretuo have the leopard as totem for its courage and ferocity. When the Otomfuo dies it is the Bretuo chief from Asante, who occupies the stool and takes charge until another is enstooled. The Ekuona take the buffalo as totem due to its strength. I also found it interesting that in the traditional setting, life is not the opposite of death, but of birth. There is too much wisdom in that. Life is indestructible. Birth is the entry point, while death is the exit point. Life is a cycle, and it revolves and recycles continuously.

He took us through names of the almighty God in traditional languages. All the names express how God is perceived. These names reflect the experience of the ancestors. He explained the Okra which is explained as the soul, the part of us that is God, the essential part of a person that makes us human. Its departure means death. It can also leave the body temporarily during one's lifetime, at moments of extreme fear. Occasionally, the Okra may become "stained", so a ritual is performed to cleanse it. Every Okra has a name, given after the day of the week it first arrived on earth.

Among the Akan:

Monday – Kwadwo – Female Adwoa, Male Kwadwu and the Okoto is the title.
Tuesday – Benada – Abena, Kwabena
Wednesday Kwaku, Akua – Ntoni
Thursday – Yawada – Yaa, Yaw
Friday – Fida – Afia, Kofi, Okyini
Saturday – Memeneda, Ama, Kwame – Atoapen
Sunday – Kwasida, Akosua, Kwesi, Bodua

All of these had characteristics that reflect the title of the names.

Monday:	Those born on Monday are said to be peaceful but tranquil
Tuesday:	Those born on Tuesday are said to be compassionate and warm
Wednesday:	Those born on Wednesdays are said to be heroic, active and cunning.
Thursday:	The earth spirit or better put, Mother Earth is said to be Asaase Yaa; probably born on Thursday. It also suggests courage.
Friday:	Friday suggests the character of a wandering, probing, climbing to higher heights.

Saturday: He who possesses the antidote against snake bite.
Atoapem for Saturdays are meant for God. We to no a na woapen –
One cannot go beyond and/or surpass God.

Lastly the Bodua (tail of an animal) suggests that God protects the handicapped -- God protects the tail-less animal.” There were a lot of other insights and enlightenment moments that led me to discover that “Aha!” moment, when I said to myself that I must go back and ask about traditional names among Africans in Ghana. I was given a name I do not use, so I decided to ask about it, to at least know what kind of education I should help my community to receive after I have been enlightened. I intend to hold discussions regarding the possibility of using traditional names as my demonstration project.

Professor Opoku teaches that death in the traditions of Africa was not a result of sin, as Hebraic traditions teach. Rather, in the African tradition, death is rather a part of life. He narrates the African mythology surrounding death, which is the need for older things to wither away and die in order to make way for newer ones. Before every banana dies, it replaces itself before it dies – a story attributed to the reason why humans die. Human beings replace themselves before death. Still death does not separate human beings permanently. Rather, the dead are hidden in an invisible part of the world. In the Mende tradition, dead people are said to go to Ngewa’s bosom.

The Kokomba in Northern Ghana who die are said to go to Uumbwardo, meaning God’s house. He encourages us to look for examples in other traditions and other parts of the world to build a stronger argument, since according to him; every European goes back to Ancient Greece. He suggests that Africans must develop a common intellectual heritage based on our experiences.

Evaluation for strategy 1 – This strategy was accomplished when all commissioned team members went through the workshop with Prof. Opoku and submitted their thoughts on their understanding of Onyamesom and Kristosom by answering a questionnaire before and after the workshop.

To participate in a Peace Ritual and compare its similarities to the Christian Holy communion (December, 2008).

On December 21, at about 3:00 pm, the group left Akropong to Mamfe to observe the Asafosa Peace Ritual. When we arrived at the ritual grounds, we were seated and waited for the arrival of the subchiefs and the Mamfehene. The Master of Ceremonies: The first Sunday of the Ohum festival. The Asafosa Peace Ritual occurred on December 21, 2008 at Mamfe- Akuapem. At 3:00 p.m. the team left Akropong for Mamfe. The chief of Mamfe came in, preceded by his entourage. He shook hands with the guests sitting in the front row, proceeded to take his seat. On this occasion, people are supposed to be in somber clothing - nothing festive yet. The chiefs of different areas started arriving - Nana Assisiesohene came in with his entourage; after shaking hands with the people in the front row, they went and shook the hand of the Chief of Mamfe - first bowing down to him. There was dancing, but before anyone could dance they had to ask permission from the chief of Mamfe.

After all the sub- chiefs were settled, everyone was required to go and greet the chief. All the men bowed, and the women curtsied. After that, they asked for a prayer to begin, asking God to be present at the festival, as well as with the Mamfe Township. The linguist was asked to invite the ancestors and asked him to Akyeamehene to come in and perform Nsagu. The ancestors and dead chiefs were invited to be part of the festival, there will be traditional dancing. Little pots were brought in by the different heads of the families. They mixed the palm wine in the big pot, and then the drinks were given to all to drink. Symbolizes unity and togetherness Osor na asaase nsa - Tweridiampong nsa – today we are drinking Asafo nsa, nana Akuapem chiefs - we need to pray, calls on other chiefs - your legacy to us is still being followed. Has to call all - cannot call one and not

another. The newly installed sub chiefs were introduced to the group. The team from the New York Theological Seminary was introduced, and then the team members introduced themselves individually.

Prof. Opoku stands in the name of the team - teachers and students to wish Nana a Happy New Year. He said, “We came to learn about the culture, since if you do not know your culture and tradition, you are lost, so we thank Nana for his invitation. The culture originates from here.” The linguist stated that they are following what thaws left behind - No one tells fold tales to Kwaku Ananse. So please teach us what we need to know; again we wish Nana and Mamfe Township a Happy New Year.

After that the Mamfehene gave a speech. “My friends of Akuapeman,” he said, proceeding to name all the chiefs and representatives who were present, as well as acknowledging the team from the New York Theological Seminary, his friend Rev. Dan Nyante, and Prof. Kofi Asare Opoku. “May another year begin! On Friday, we will have a durbar. This is for the sub chiefs who have invited us to come and drink, but because I am the Chief, it stands to reason that I have to say something.

The history of Asafosa is as follows, our ancestors who started this Township, realized that after every year, it was important for them to sit down and make sure that there were no quarrels. After settling all quarrels, every family comes with a pot of wine to mix together, asking for togetherness, oneness, love and peace. God knows that there will always be strife - but His son Jesus Christ commanded his disciples to come together in communion – our ritual began barely 1000 years ago, however, has been going prior to the advent of Christianity in our country.

‘If you sort out all your differences that is when you can come and drink the Asafosa.’ He explained that there was a delay in the proceedings, because just before they started, they were informed that one of the families had an issue, so they stopped everything and went to the family house to resolve that issue. He compared it to the Holy Communion - where before you partake of the Holy Communion, you are to make sure that you have no quarrels with anyone. If you do not sort out your differences prior to drinking the Asafosa, after drinking it, you wipe out all the issues you may or may not have with someone. You in effect start off with a clean slate. He asked the Mamfe Township to live together in love and unity.

The chief then updated the people of the improvements he was bringing into the community. After that there was a health presentation, where the community was taught how to wash their hands and how to dispose of waste. He welcomed the team from NYTS; he welcomed all members of the team as brothers and sisters. He said, “We all look alike and when you go back, we will keep in touch; anytime you come to Ghana, please come and stay here. We are proud of our festival and are glad you decided to celebrate this festival with us.” He made other announcements as to the celebrations for senior citizens over 70 years of age in the township on Christmas day to be hosted by the wives of the chiefs.

After that it was time for the Asafosa drink. [Asafosa Nsa means togetherness, oneness, love that exists in the community.] “We do not want any quarrels. We all know why we are here. We thank the Mamfehene, and our birth day is this day. We have examined all paths leading to Mamfe, and have found that everything is as it should be.

Those that we found wanting, we have prayed about it and hope that God will take care of it for us.

‘At this juncture, we will begin to call upon all the families that established this Town. When your name is called, please bring your pot of palm wine to be put in the big pot in the center,’ to show Asomani - Asafohene Kankam was set on the side, Asafo hene kyeame - put in the pot; Nana Nyiresihene -poured in the big pot. Nana Oforiwa Amanfo set aside; Akyereme Ebusuapayin - put on the side; Nana Obeng Kumi II, Nana Oye Asempa set side, Akrahene Ahenmaa Tete - side; Okyeamehene Opare Dabiete - poured into the pot, Kankam Menukure Ofioahene, Offei Kwa Gyebi; Odamia Ashiete - side; Okuabehene Kyeame Akuffo Asante - set aside; Apekasamahene - set side; Okyetutu IV; Nana Opeabea -poured into pot, Mbabaa Hema - side.

Abontindohene-side, Nana Amankwaa Apam - set aside; Ankobea Hene - poured into the pot, Gyaasihene - into the pot; Nana Apredihene - set aside, Ankobea Asiedu; Nana Assisiesohene - set aside; Nana Krontihene - set aside; Nana Gyasihemaa-set aside; pot from NYTS team - set aside; Nana Akomea, Akropong - set aside; Gyidomhene- Akropong - set aside. Owners of the township - Gyidom - queen mother of Mamfe - into pot; Osabarima Nana Ansa Sasraku, Gyidomhene of Akuapem brings his drink last - after him no one can bring any other drinks. Now all the set aside drinks are all poured into the big pot and mixed together.

The linguist comes to offer Nsa Guo - the drinks are mixed and then the linguist - people sing - takes off one of his slippers off his feet and starts with the Nsaguo by men first mentioning God, all the families who established the Township; prays for all guests asks for traveling mercies for anyone who traveled to come to this festival. Mentions the

name of the Chief of Mamfe and all the chiefs; prays for the run-off elections and prays for a peaceful election and a peaceful administration. Chorus behind him. Prays for the traveling mercies for all the guests who traveled to the festival. At the end he pours all of the drink on the ground.

After that there was traditional dancing and all the other pots of palm wine were poured into the main big pot mixed and put back into the smaller pots and given back to every group that presented a pot of palm wine. Each group would then serve its members a drink with a gourd. The mixed palm wine is then offered to everyone at the festival. The chief then got up and danced, and after that the Master of Ceremonies stated that: After the chief takes a bath, all water is finished - there is no more water; so after the dance of the chief, no one else can dance. Before the closing prayer, the chief announced that a donation of £1,000 (British Pound Sterling) had been made by a daughter of Mamfe who wanted to help the children's educational fund. Another son of Akuapem had sent some drinks for the chief to serve his guests. The festival ended with a prayer by Rev. Daniel Nyante.

The ritual went on as described under strategy 1. It proceeded very well, and everyone agreed that the underlying reason behind this festival should be adopted by Christians, especially when ushering in the New Year. Here are some of the individual thoughts about the ritual:

Jeremiah Mensah:

The program started around 2:30 pm and the background was more of mourning. The colors were black and red: the canopy, the clothing of the chiefs, elders and the people were mourning or funeral dress. Though the program was a traditional program,

local gospel songs were played. The words indicated thanksgiving and also sort of praises to God. This indicates that in modern Ghana, Christianity has had a way of entering into African culture. As the chief was performing rituals at the palace, the drummers drummed to invite all the people to the program. This implies the people in the area really understand the language of the drum. The Omanhene came to the ground, started shaking the people's hands, he did it with his elders, sub-chiefs and Queen Mother and wished the people A Happy New Year. The women who followed the chief and his elders sang appellations to the chief.

All the visitors also went to pay their respects to the chief. The main purpose of the ritual was to settle differences that cropped up in the course of the year. This settlement of disputes brings unity and togetherness among the people of Mamfe. This was symbolically done by pouring palm wine from various sub-chiefs and the Omanhene and mixing them and sharing the drink with everyone there. What impressed me was that the pots full of wine from five royal houses or chiefs were first poured into the big pot. Meaning if any other drink not from royal family went into it and it got full then how could they add the other drinks from the other royal family?

Another thing that I noticed was the prayers made by traditional elders (Asafosa leaders) was more of blessing from God, gods and ancestors other than cursing the enemies of progress of the developments of the community. The chief prayed to God first before earth god, gods and ancestors. This implies that African traditionalists are conscious of God (Onyame) Though the ritual was about peace making, I can infer from the prayer and the speech made by the chief they are also concerned about the development of the town. This implies as part of traditional rituals development of the

town is also a matter of concern. The chief, though a traditional entity, sounded theological by citing instances from the Bible about God sending his son Jesus to teach his disciples to break bread and drink wine to iron out differences among them meaning God endorses drinking at a table as a symbol to settle disputes.

The chief made it clear that even introducing this (Eucharist) in Africa, Africans had their own way of doing it, that it isn't new to the Africans. This to me made it easier for Africans to accept the Christian teachings. I also think the chief is a Christian though a traditional leader, even if he is not, he has knowledge about Christianity. That is why he allowed gospel songs, Christian prayer and he himself referring from the Christian Bible. At every stage of the program, the authority of the chief was insisted: the chief (Osabarima Sasraku III) in his talk had to sit. When he danced, no one should dance after him. His drink was last to be mentioned and poured into the big pot. The people were asked to get prepared for when the chief stood up or left. It meant the program had ended. It had a proverb that "when the chief bathed all the water got finished," meaning no one can bathe or do anything after him.

Christina Mensah

On Sunday, at 2 pm we arrived at the Mamfe durbar ground to witness a peace ritual which is an indication to start the celebration of the Ohum festival. The durbar ground was decorated with mixed colors. For example, the canopies used had red and black colors mixed. The place looked like a funeral setting. This resemblance of funeral setting was crowned when the people including the various sub-chiefs and their queen mothers as well as the main chief, Nana Sasraku, were all in red and black clothes. Talking drums were used to entertain the people. The various sub-chiefs and their queen

mothers came first before the chief of the town, Nana Sasraku. After his arrival, all sub-chiefs and their queen mothers including the invited guests were given the opportunity to go and greet Nana Sasraku.

Prayers were then said which involved both Christians and the Chief linguist being the traditionalist. Drumming followed but there were no songs accompanying. No one was allowed to dance until one of the elders came out to dance, made some signs indicate that people can now come forward to dance. After this, Nana Sasraku gave his welcoming address wishing everybody a happy New Year. The real celebration of the Peace Ritual started after the above incident. However, before they started, one of the Asafo members placed a big pot on the durbar ground in front of the Asafo group. This is because they were officiating over the Peace Ritual. The Asafo drink was then demanded from all the sub-chiefs and their queen mothers as well as the main chief of the town and his queen mother.

One symbolic thing was that not all the drinks in various pots were poured into the big pot because there were some of them who were not indigenous people. These people only came there to settle as farmers and others. What they did was that after pouring all the indigenous peoples drinks into the big pot, they mixed it with the rest which were not poured and distributed among the various groups. According to them, it signifies unity and peace among them. Nana Sasraku linked this peace ritual with the Last Supper Jesus had with his disciples. Nana Sasraku said if even somebody is harboring any bad sentiment against the other, the moment they take part in the celebration it indicates that every problem is automatically settled.

The moment Nana Sasraku finished saying all these things, the people responded affirmatively which indicated that they own their allegiance to the chief. Then again everybody was given the chance to dance. Nana Sasraku was the last to dance. After him, no one was allowed to dance. The occasion was ended with a prayer by Rev. Daniel Nyante. My concern here was that all festivals I have witnessed, the chief priest was seen as the spiritual head to ensure the success of the occasion, but there was nothing like that. Why?

Hajara Mohammed-Rufai

The space provided is not enough to express observations at this ritual. Any significance regarding color of clothing? They wore mourning clothes. Wondering if anybody listened to the background music as we waited for special start of proceedings? They started the ceremonies by asking the spirit of God; maybe the Holy Spirit to come down and take control of proceedings. Then came the libation where Onyankopong (king of kings) was called upon before things got underway officially. The essence of this ritual as I understood it is a healing for the township. I hope it could be replicated in this country to heal it of political and ethnic polarization. All heads of families, sub-chiefs, elders and individuals are supposed to settle all disputes and misunderstandings pertaining to anything at all and then contribute drinks as a sign of goodwill into one common pot for all to drink. This is good.

I noticed the chief personally giving portions of the drink to some of the people (males) around him. As the servant of the people, that is significant and I think the first example was found in Christ and the idea about the Holy Communion, if I'm right. Therefore, the end of every year goes with all disputes and quarrels. The Asafosa ensures

that the New Year begins with a clean slate. Where all wrongs have been made right and the townships forges ahead in unity and togetherness. This show of progress, oneness does not leave visitors and guests out. It is all embracing. A system of peacemaking ritual where perceived enemies of progress are prayed for not cursed.

They prayed that if anybody was against them, God should grant the follow understanding and a change of heart that was fabulous. Everyone, except the chief, points the forefinger up to signal of a supreme transcendent reality above when they dance. This was noticeable since one would have anticipated a chief fetish priest (Okomfo Panin) at an occasion that was home of a ritual but this was controlled by opening prayers and libations that gave God and the Holy Spirit a chance to reign supreme. Ghana as a country needs to (have) a replica of this ritual.

Evaluation for strategy 2 – This strategy was accomplished with the submission of the participants' thoughts after the debriefing session occurred the day after the ritual utilizing the travel schedule and journal.

APPENDIX 5

GOAL THREE – WE FOUND GOLD

Obi mfi kwan mu na n'anom asem nsa
(None returns from traveling and then has nothing to say)

Develop the Institute for Diasporan and African Culture (TIDAC) for the purpose of building a stronger connection between the Ghanaian Communities in the Diaspora, Ghanaian Christians in Ghana.

1. Develop and train Board of Directors for the Institute by the Chairman of the Board. (January – March, 2009)

The Institute was registered as a corporate non-profit organization. At the first Board Meeting of the Directors, the Board voted to have an Advisory Board giving the Executive Director the latitude to shape the mission of the Institute with their approval. The Advisory members were contacted, asked to be the Institute's Board members and invited to attend the Inaugural activities for the period March 20-22, 2009.

Most of the Advisory board members arrived on the 18th and a short training program was presented to Board asking them to: a) be promoters of the Institute; b) they agreed to the acronym of TIDAC for the Institute. The discussion ensued about the logo, mission and vision of the Institute – TIDAC and all members agreed that TIDAC should adopt the concept of the Baobab Tree; to establish an Advisory Board instead of a Board of Directors and the formulation of a mission statement by the Executive Director for their approval.

Evaluation for Strategy 1 – This strategy was accomplished when the members of the Board of Directors were identified and a training session scheduled for them or in New York, USA where it was agreed by the chairman that the Board would be an advisory

Board as opposed to a Board of Directors. This strategy was accomplished when the Advisory Board was identified and they attended the inauguration of TIDAC in New York in March, 2009.

Inaugurate The Institute for Diasporan and African Culture at Akropong. December, 2008).

The inauguration of the Institute did not occur for two reasons:

- 1) Most people who would be witnesses were in New York and
- 2) There was tension and unease in Ghana because of the political run-off that was to occur on December 28, 2009.

The inauguration of the Institute for Diasporan and African Culture (TIDAC) did not occur at Akropong in December as planned. The inauguration was initially to have occurred on December 20th from 12 noon to 3:00 pm. However, Ghana was having run-off elections when we got to Ghana, and so due to the political climate in Ghana, most of the participants would not be able to attend any of our scheduled activities because some participants had to travel back to their hometowns in order to vote. The run-off of the elections affected some of the activities planned for the occasion.

This strategy did not occur because there were run-off elections in Ghana which create an atmosphere of unease and tension. The schedule already agreed on had to be changed to make sure all the festivities occur prior to the run off elections in case there was any political unrest between opposing factions; depending on who won the elections. The decision was made to have the inauguration in New York in either March or April, 2009.

Subsequently, the inauguration of TIDAC was held in New York over a 3-day period and the program format was as follows:

1. A workshop at the New York Theological Seminary on Friday, March 20, 2009
2. A Prayer and Healing Service at Bethel Presbyterian Reformed Church on Saturday, March 21, 2009,
3. A thanksgiving prayer service at Canarsie Reformed Church on March 22, 2009.
4. Reception after Church Service at Canarsie Reformed Church in Brooklyn

Evaluation for Strategy 1 – This strategy was accomplished however, there was a change of venue from Akropong to New York and the inauguration was actually held March 20 - 23, 2009 in New York. The inaugural activities of the Institute, started on Friday, March 20, 2009 with a workshop at New York Theological Seminary; a Prayer and Healing Service at Bethel Presbyterian Reformed Church on Saturday, March 21, 2009 and a thanksgiving service at Canarsie Reformed Church on March 22, 2009. All the activities were fully attended by invited guests and were well received.

The Workshop was held at the Interchurch Center at 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY. The afternoon activities started with a prayer by Reverend Daniel Nyante. The president of NYTS, Rev. Dr. Dale Irvin, officially welcomed everyone and stated that 25 - 30 years ago, he found a little book which has been one of his treasured possessions. This was one of Prof. Opoku's first books, so he brought the book today to get it autographed. He wanted to start the program with two proverbs, one from the book which is: "It is through other people's wisdom that we learn wisdom ourselves; a single person's understanding does not amount to anything." And one that he learned that morning: "Until the lions have their historians, tales of the hunt will always glorify the hunter".

This afternoon is a collective launching of wisdom. Daniel has forced NYTS to rewrite their slogan, “the city as a campus” to be “the world as our campus”. With programs in Ghana, Africa and the United States, it is a transnational phenomenon. The work is an exciting mission, theology, culture.

Eva Shaw-Taylor introduced the members of the first panel who were:

Professor Mercy Amba Oduyoye,

Prof. Opoku, Dr. Marian Ronan,

Dr. Cynthia Diaz,

Dr. Obery Hendricks,

Osahene Offei Kwasi Agyeman of Akuapem,

Rev. Samuel Atiemo.

Members of the 2nd panel were:

Rev. Dr. Felix Busby,

Kirk Lyons,

Dr. Wanda Lundy (Amma Akuffo),

Catechist Aboah Offei,

Dr. William Burrows could not attend due to surgery.

Discussions were started with opening statements from Prof. Opoku and Prof. Mercy Oduyoye with a response from the panel members.

Prof. Kofi Asare Opoku:

Opened his speech by thanking Odomankoma, which in the Akan Tradition of Ghana for God; the different names given to God by the other African countries, for bringing us into the world for a purpose; ancestors for bequeathing to us our languages

and culture that epitomizes our African inventiveness, and all those who have supported the Institute and have guided His efforts. In particular, Dale Irvin, and all who are present today especially Rev. Nyante for his vision and untiring efforts to bring this Institute into reality. Emphasize that gratitude is a very important attribute in the African Tradition, and this can be support with the staff of the linguist: which shows that says that “When a cock drinks water, it raises its head in gratitude to God.” ‘Our ancestors tell us that if chickens show gratitude for life sustaining water, why shouldn’t human beings give gratitude to our benefactors? When our ancestors were at a loss for words to express their gratitude, they would simply give up and say to their benefactors, I give you life - he gives all of us life.

‘In 1927 Edwin Smith wrote in a book - *The Golden Stool* paraphrasing, ‘African paganism is doomed to failure and extinction, and the only choice open to the African is Christianity or Islam.’ On the occasion of the official inauguration of the Institute, respectfully and offer his profound gratitude to *Obo Adieyie God the Creator*, who has guided our efforts to establish the Institute.

This statement reflects the fact that those who brought the gospel to our shores did not know us or our social institutions, and yet they tried to convert us without knowing where or what they were converting us from. But armed to the teeth and armed to the hilt with the deepest and most profound species of ignorance, conceit and contempt, they tried to convert us to their brand of Christianity. Most of us have accepted this as a reality, and have carried on with attitudes, approaches and interpretations that continue to deny the Africans and their culture, a share in the divine dispensation.

But I come to this question of divine self-disclosure in the world with a firm conviction that God was not so unkind as to have refused to disclose himself or herself to our African ancestors, and it is the task of Africans of whatever persuasion, be they Christian or Islamic, to discover the many ways God has made himself/herself known in their culture. We need to seek the good and the true in our own traditions, and believe in them with our own hearts, and use them in the expressions of our acquired faiths.

Mahatma Gandhi said he did not want his house to be walled in on all sides or his windows to be stuffed, he wanted all the cultures to be blown about his house as freely as possible but he refused to be blown off his feet by any. This refusal to be blown off our feet will help us to be ourselves and to maintain our identity, and contribute to human understanding of who God is from our rich cultural resources.

‘We have been given the gift of writing our own stories and are responsible for our own lives. We need to do our own spiritual work or authentic theories lest we wind up living someone else’s dream. Our ancestors had their own principles, world views, social philosophy on which they organized their lives. Christians in Africa have made many claims. Beyond mere claims, which are easy to make, African Christians need to come up with concrete answers to the question: has Christianity provided African societies with a vital philosophy of life around which they have or can organize their social institutions?

Our societies are still organized on the basis of a vital philosophy of life. Shouldn’t we try to know this philosophy thoroughly and use it, instead of merely assigning it to irrelevant and brushing it under the carpet?

This institute is like a child and our ancestors taught that there is no wealth where there are no children [and the hunger of some in Africa] – To have children is to have wealth, but to wear clothes is merely colors. Both proverbs point to the potential that children bring to the world. Children bring fresh hope to an otherwise stale world and family. TIDAC brings fresh hope and a daring one at that; to explore in-depth and in relevance, the crucial area of our inherited culture, and its interaction with Christianity. The Institute is not content to aspire to be like everybody else. It is specific in what it wants to be, and what it wants to contribute in bringing about; African Christians steeped in their own traditions, and sharing the gifts God has given them through their culture, to enrich the world and human life in general.

I believe the Institute is like the marketplace; the Yoruba say that the desire to cheat and the refusal to be cheated is the cause of the noise in the market. The denial of validity to our African traditions, and the affirmation of our traditions as a valid basis for theologizing, in particular and life in general, are the cause of the noise and stimulating discussions that have already begun at the Institute. I am confident as I look to the future that the Great Spirit moves with us as our partner.

Prof Mercy to comment on Prof. Opoku's statement:

Good Afternoon and welcome to this auspicious occasion – my role is to highlight some things I hope can happen. The Institute – you have heard my brother – the ethos that we would like to create so I am going to lift up a few issues that I hope will be addressed or probed as we create the Institute.

The issue of our oneness at humanity. Not just our oneness as people of Africa and of African descent but our oneness as humanity because as we come together in the

market place claiming our space, other people in the market place will be claiming their space as well and it is together that we will be able to know what it actually means to be human so I want that in this world dominated by images of war that we would be set free from the bondage of conflict and our divisive barriers.

We, who were once “no people will become a living community of the people of God forever. The issues that have been highlighted as I became associated with this effort have been #1 inclusiveness and that is why I put that first. Our acceptance and appropriation of diversity because the dear Creator loves diversity. Otherwise I don’t understand, because if I created the world, everyone would look like me because I am the best person ever, there is a sense in which this diversity will have to be upheld in the Institute in creating and also because of the diversity, we have all become hybrid beings. The day before yesterday I was telling my younger sister about an episode in our mother’s life. Our mother died at age 93; so this was in the colonial days.

She went to Wesley Girls High School and used to have her holidays in a certain lawyer’s house because she was friends with the little girl. Her uncle had clothes like this (what Prof. Mercy was wearing) for the two little girls, so on a Saturday when they were busy wearing their “ntama” at home and they were so fascinated, very happy with it. This lawyer stood upstairs and said “Who are those village people down there” – so the girls shrugged – “you go and get dressed; when I saw you I thought you had come to sell kenkey” - so there was a stage in our life when even our very clothing was an issue.

It was a low clothing but today, this sister of mine – if you see her – today she is in this wear her Ghanaian clothes and all the fashions of the West and most Africans – we have become more enriched by the experience of having been made to appreciate other

people's culture so now I am hoping that coming together in the Institute, we will be appropriating each other's culture. If you just look at the clothing, most of the time it's the men who first adjust to the western clothes than the women but the women have become more hybrid in their clothing than the men but they will come along, slowly.

1. Hybridity and identity are issues we have, our specific identities and contributions, we are becoming one and when you are becoming one, then you have to make sure that you are contributing to the new picture. Our values, cultural values that we have to bring to the table as people of Africa and of African descent, we've talked community till it doesn't even seem to have any meaning anymore because we don't practice community anymore. We have to delve into the issues of community and how we can practice community so it becomes a reality. Our religion and spirituality have been under the hammer from the day the missionaries thought they were bringing God to Africa, so when they came and found that God was already there, they were shocked. So they did everything they could to make sure that the God that was already there was not the God they were bringing. Now all of that is over and we have to appropriate and contribute to the spirituality that will enable us to be together as a people. And it shows African Religion, Spirituality, Culture, our enduring values have to be at the center the Institute.

2. I spent some time teaching at the University of Ibadan and at one staff meeting – I have a way of getting on the wrong side of people, but that's all right because that is my nature, I was telling the men who were teaching ATR that they have no theology, and can you imagine that doing this with Udowu sitting there, who is one of the people who created the discipline – because I don't see you working out the meaning of God now to

us in our lives but just telling us stories without examining the stories and telling us the ethics that come out of the stories and the agency that is expected of us and what we are supposed to be doing and if you have not done that cycle for me you have not done theology; so everybody said what is she talking about? If we don't do this, the African spirituality, the primal imagination of the African about God and the mystery of God will be lost; they looked; and you are all Christians, we all came from the ATR so if everyone is becoming Christian then what? So there was a sense in which we have to study this religion and culture in depth and let's appropriate what God has been striving to tell us; what God has been trying to tell us all these years. One of my colleagues took this really seriously because when he left the department and went to a new university, he declared that he was no longer Christian and that he belonged to the Ifa cult. His father was an Ifa priest and he got himself initiated into the Ifa cult and practiced it and taught and was getting students to get into what the Ifa poetry was about. We have to have more Africans confident and ready to go into our religion and culture and retrieve what we are going to offer to the world.

3. My this concern is what I have been hearing since the 80's is that Christianity has shifted south, that Christianity in the south is growing much faster and its dying in the North. What kind of Christianity and to what purpose because as you can hear, I evaluate religion tuition by its outcome and what its doing with the people in the community and so I say to what purpose? Are we seeking peace with justice, compassion for the fallen, is that happening? Are we talking affirming our Africanness – is that happening? You have over there campaign tunes – African art, music dance these cultural dances are all our contributions and whether they are done in the Caribbean, the US, in Canada, in Latin

America, they are all African art. How is the Institute going to help us to promote this? I brought Englebert Yven – assassinated in the Cameroon for political reasons – he practiced his theology and this did not go well with some of the politics, he was also an artist, “The Way of the Cross And Resurrection Colors” have African symbols and their meanings. Those of you who have been in Ghana, on Oxford Street in Accra, I cringe when I walk on that street I get upset because all the pictures that Ghanaian Christians are buying and putting in their homes; the man they call Jesus is blue eyed and blond he doesn’t even have Semitic features. If this is where he was born, he should be looking like a Lebanese or Palestinians, why does he look like a Finnish man? Because that Finnish is God. I will leave Yven’s book for anyone who wants to see it.

4. What my brother has so eloquently stated – we have a job before us and the task is not one which Africans from the continent are creating and inviting Africans from outside to join, we are creating this together as Africans from the continent and the Diaspora and we are creating this in partnership with every human being no matter what color who thinks that humanity is at a crisis of trying to discover where we are as human beings and everywhere people are trying to live in the image of God, they should be there too.

You can have billions and they can go in no time, that you can have anything you want and when we look at what is happening we keep asking, why is it that we cannot manage the economy in such a way that on this earth, there will be no homeless, and nobody without insurance. These very mundane things, we are not integrating them into our spirituality, our religion and trying to make them our priorities. I will hope that there

will be issues that we will select and work on them together. Some of the things I have mentioned will be on the agenda. I want to end by saying:

When we sow the seeds of hope we expect to harvest love,
When we sow the seeds of justice we expect to harvest peace;
When we sow the seeds of compassion, we expect a harvest of solidarity. God reign upon our efforts; the rain that transforms is from you God; we know somewhere in the heavens, there is what we need in order to be fully human and that God will let it reach us. And I am saying this from the Adinkra symbol that is called “*bririba wo suru Nyame na obeka yensa*” –
The symbol of hope, the only things we work with.

We have God a young man of African descent who was saying we have the audacity to hope – we now have the audacity to say we are inaugurating an Institute that will incorporate people of Africa and of African descent and every other human being who wants this for humanity – that is audacious but I believe God will stay with us.

Obery Hendricks

I am thrilled to be here at this gathering. I recall speaking with Rev. Nyante – in his class it was his dream and vision but I didn’t realize how serious he was. I told him that I wanted to visit Ghana sometime and he came back with a date. That was the first trip and I learned so much. It was amazing to see what has come out of his vision – a burning vision. He has been able to enlist so many brilliant people with everyone working together, one point – extraordinary word – respond to – the Gandhi’s quote – “Refused to be blown off his feet” – I think it’s very important because in my experience in Ghana, and I had the extraordinary honor to preach at Grace Presbyterian Church and I came to see that something I idealized the communitarian nature of Christian worship that is what we see today has been defiled by industrial capitalism. Causing people to be so individualistic and performance oriented. Even in the worship service, I saw people

sing as one people. They were not self consciousness, being from the south, I could see they were singing from their hearts and souls. What I recall from the south is a mournful deathlike quality and in African churches, you see a lot of celebration but it does not have the same communitarian spirit – it becomes too often segregated – people of one mind, body, soul and spirit. It reflects what Christianity should be and for a lack of performance on their part. We need to focus on community and community worship.

I saw the contribution to Christianity that could be really of benefit to African Americans and to all Christians because the country and culture that has been enlightened but not been seduced by the west. Everything can be explained in terms of rationale. I recognize its image, all of these theories that are to explain all things; reflects God and the conflicts of the west. Some pathologies have their causes on another level of reality because I witnessed at least two exorcisms. I was wondering what was happening and people who were happy and smiling and all of a sudden they were totally possessed by something. There was no signal – it was immediate – I was skeptical – with my western views and what I really saw was something we will call demon-possession.

One was touched – called upon and could no longer be hid and when I say I saw at least two- there were a number of people who came up. Some people are just acting out but others there was real discernment of the type that I am not used to seeing in the settings I have been in. I looked in the eyes of two young men and there weren't – one young man was slightly small and he wrestled with four men – his body turned into a weapon – at one point, I stood there walked over and looked –what was recognized is that these pathologies can have the meaning that we can categorize - what I saw is the importance of taking a holistic view of reality. Reformist orientation – emotions –

children masquerade as spirituality – what I did not see was a simplistic approach. Cross fertilization – there is so much the West can learn through the Institute – in terms that people recognize.

Not being lost – refusal of not being blown off our feet, I saw a lot of things being blown off feet. I saw to my horror, on the worst enactment of western evangelism – saw them doing the exact same things that I reject – the prosperity ministries – there is no difference in the way they dress, in the slogans they used, the jewelry they wore and no difference in treating the ministry as a status instead of the role – no difference in the way they offered cheap grace, cheap healing.

So from the American perspective, we here we are sold by this where we have spent time or are spending time to raise the consciousness of African Americans so they can see through this. We can share some of this from our end. What I see as an image that has hurt African Americans and can only hurt the people of Africa – the colonial mentality – flies in the face of community influence because individuals only think about themselves and it's about materialism.

We can help each other refuse to be blown off out feet or even when we are, that we will have help to gain our feet back. I have high hopes for the Institute – the beginning to see where the dream came from and germinate and to have distinguished scholars – is there a continent on which you have not studied – a question for Prof. Opoku?

I look forward to working with the Institute as closely as I can and to help as much as I can – thanks to Dale for his magnanimousness to help me bring this to fruition – one of the few western historic churches that truly understands about the values of

Africans. We have a few resources here and I look forward to all that will be come – we can help each other and help some of our people who are lost and who really feel they have found salvation and what they have found is a good time.

Nana Offei Kwasi Agyeman - Krontihene of Akuapem

I see Rev. Nyante as a friend and a brother but I did not know he was a visionary I am here this afternoon and I am really impressed, I would like to give him encouragement and to pray for him because he is one of a kind and I thank God for people like him. The other aspect is that when you are in Ghana, the traditional leaders have been vilified by the church, to the extent that people think that we are pagans and that we don't have cultures of our own and all the culture we have is fetish and not Christian. This afternoon I am hereto tell you that I have been a Presbyterian all my life – where Daniel is from where I am from you cannot be anything else.

I was born again in 1961 when I went into the Army, and I would preach as well. I was in the US for about 30 years, I was a Deacon, a Presbyter, and was proud to be a Christian, then one day they called me to Ghana and said my uncle had died and I was to be made a traditional chief. I had a Jewish supervisor and when I told him I was going to Ghana he said: Manny are you crazy – what are you going to do? I replied: I am going to become a chief. He said: what is wrong with you? Do they pay you a lot over there? I said: there is not a penny.

But the sad thing is that I followed with that step to become a chief and I was told by most of the Presbyterian ministers that I was pagan because I had become a chief. Probably one of my deep disappointments is that Rev. Atiemo is my cousin, my pastor and Catechist Aboah Offei is his brother-in-law but these same ministers were saying that

the traditional institution in Ghana was pagan and that is my belief and that is why the spirit of my ancestors sent me to New York to participate in the formation of this Institute. Fortunately for me, because Rev. Nyante is a friend, he invited me to give me audience and to make sure that my side of the picture will be protected. It is a great opportunity for all of us to work together as a people and not to continue to stigmatize people because of what they do not understand. Most of the history and the research that has been done that have been carried out in culture in Ghana and other African States have presented certain facts that are not true.

We have rich cultural practices in Ghana that shared religion but it was easy for the earlier research people who came to Ghana to portray our culture as fetish – easier for them where they did the research, they probably interviewed unscrupulous people attendants in the palace who did not know what they were talking about. There is a language problem, for example, when we “worship” versus “paying reverence to” we have the same word that represents both worship and reverence/respect. When I give you respect, respect we say “sum” – when I worship God, it’s the same sum – when they talk to an illiterate attendant, and when they see me pouring libation or pronouncing certain words, he is going to say that I am worshipping my ancestors, which is not true.

If he tells you in Twi, most likely what he is saying is that, I am giving reverence to my ancestors because we as a people think that when you die, you don’t disappear from the face of the earth. Our community/society is made up of the living and the dead of society, we talk to them, sometimes we give them food – they are all symbolic we are not stupid enough to think that they will come back and eat it. We feel that because of the life they lived before they died, they were good quality character attributes you want

to continue with. When we have a discussion, we want to invite the spirits of our ancestors to participate; this reminds me of a story I read recently:

A British went to the cemetery lay flowers on the tomb of his father and a Chinese man came there with a bowl of rice and left it on the tomb of his father and the English man said to the Chinese man you just placed a rice when do you expect your ancestors to come and eat it – and the Chinese man said immediately your ancestors come to smell your flowers.

Everything that we do is symbolic. Earlier researchers came to Ghana and they misrepresented what they saw. When you see a linguist, normally the chief does not speak publicly, he has a linguist who speaks on his behalf – people think they are fetish priests, the chieftaincy institution is just like every advanced placed – social political appointment, people got together and they wanted leaders – having certain qualities that people were expecting from leaders – things were handled by professional people being Christian pastors or Muslim imams or even fetish priests; we have our traditional religions there but to imply that our traditional leaders are not Christian, is wrong- people who appreciate that Christ is the Lord of their lives and believe Him and still do the things that are related to leading his town or his community.

I want to be close to Prof. Opoku. If I had known Prof Opoku was coming I would probably have stayed in Ghana because he is my historian. A lot of things are happening there are a lot of misconceptions about many of the rituals of the culture such as pouring of libation, that the chiefs worship the black stool, black stools are symbols of our ancestors and after we go up there and talk to them, people feel we are worshipping a piece of wood. There are so many practices in our traditional settings that if you don't

understand you need to ask. Some of us don't understand what is going on and when you are dealing with our stools; you want to make the chiefs mysterious in whatever they do, we want to keep it in secrecy. You are supposed to work with a group of people and any time you decide not to work with the group of people you will be destooled.

We have a kind of democracy in our culture – so many practices that are not understood by foreign researchers and when they put meaning to it, it is rather derogatory and unfortunately for us, our ministers in 2009 who are supposed to tell you the truth, follow what the foreigners have written about us but you are surprised that they ascribe to those ends. In 2009 it is surprising that they still subscribing to the notion that our culture is fetish – it is not fetish by any imagination. We have our traditional religions and since Christianity exists, so if you have any questions or if you want to know anything our culture about our chiefs, because a lot of times you do not know how chiefs become chiefs, their role in society – I am always available for questions

Dr. Marian Ronan

I recently started to learn about Africa – jigsaw puzzle to put it together to learn where all the countries are. Irish catholic and second generation – grandparents borne in Ireland and came here and so in the 1980s decided to go to NYTS not because of civil rights but because as an Irish whose father had only gone to the 10th grade felt more at home at NYTS. So many working class whites were taught that they had more in common with the rich white people but that is not true. My people, the Irish, were colonized by the British described the Irish as primitive savages in the Virginia thought because they were west of the British they were like Native Americans. Question to the panelists – missionaries said terrible things, it is important that Americans learn that

Ghanaian culture is not fetishistic. There is a bigger problem of the two aspects of Mercy's talk – the importance of traditional religion and culture being recognized over and against the things the colonists want to do about it and then she talked about Hybridity.

There is tension between traditional African Religion and Hybridity. I belong to an international women's group called the Grail – in 19 countries including Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and South Africa and I am on the international commission and was asked to write a paper about culture and so that all the members of this group can discuss. Women all over the world can discuss and an African grail member from Tanzania who is Catholic who has written a paper on inculturation stating that cultures should adapt to the gospel. She is African a Tanzanian, I don't agree with her and she is an African. This is not a missionary, the evil missionaries have gone back even though they are all not as bad as they have been made out to be. The paper which I need to point out that culture is a good deal more complex than her theology leads her to think; but of course I am an American even with my Irish story – I have a PhD and my brother is a partner in a law firm and I am saying that you need to pay more attention to Traditional African Religion

There is a polarization between her and the catholic faith and much of African culture and this is a standard theological position among Catholics in East Africa. She is studying in the catholic seminary that contests the notion of enculturation as the gospel dominating culture. We need to have a conversation – the questions is what do I do about this that some Africans actually believe that their culture is inferior to Christianity how do we talk about this without me inscribing dominance from the West?

Dr. Cynthia Diaz

I greet you in the name of our Lord – especially congratulate to support, to walk with Rev. Nyante. God is very purposeful – it is not strange that many of us have found our way to NYTS. It is very good that so many churches and small congregations have become partners with the Institute. That is all part of the divine plan – it was formulated in a remarkable way. I am and have been called to lead and to serve in two congregations one at NYTS and the other one being Elmont Presbyterian Church Daniel is yet to visit the church, it is a hybrid church. The congregation comprises of people from various parts of the Diaspora, including 3 nations from Africa and the Caribbean as well as Caucasians who did not flee when the people of color started joining the Church. My first introduction was one of my sisters in ministry – an ordained female pastor who without question had a passion and a heart for ministry and she went to this particular ministry to serve. I met her in my second year of seminary when she was at her wits end. Even though she was committed to multicultural and to transforming the people of God, she was totally and completely baffled that the congregation would not accept her as their leader.

It is not because she was black but it was because they had had other white pastors who they loved but she had come into the community of making the mistake of thinking she could come in and change the church politics overnight. The session and the original white leaders did not have a problem with people of color coming into the community but they had a problem with them having power – there was a split – she was ready to deal with the black white issue. She did not acknowledge and accept in any way what their cultures were. She had not realized that there was a distinction between:

- Africans that have migrated from Africa;
- Blacks born in America who are of African descent, and
- Blacks born in the Caribbean who are of African descent;

So they totally shut her out. The core of the Institute – some of us come with the missionary mindset – even when we come with a right mindset, we have to make space for the different voices and distinctions to exist, and otherwise we will create a problem.

I came into that society with the thoughts of my own ancestors – I came with a particular understanding – a message that was grounded just in my culture, but they all understood that I understood by me not making certain assumptions – as our facilitators have pointed out, we continue to walk with and grow with the Institute. That whoever comes to the Institute, we will create space at the table that we accept and give them room to each person at the table. It is not by accident that you have Sis Wanda Lundy engaging in the process – God placed her in my life – I have spent my last two (2) years understanding that there are differences.

Two (2) Nigerians who serve in the session and there are distinctions between those who come from the north and those who are from the South. I don't understand why Africans have to fight with Africans? What are they talking about – what do they mean one comes from Sierra Leone and the other one comes from Nigeria? One of the things the Lord blessed me with is taking the doctoral work of Sister Wanda Lundy and engaging the congregations to work out an authentic community. I have stayed right there and that is the work of the Institute.

Recognizing and embracing each and every individual as we come to the market place that we understand that there is a peace to exchange voices ideas and very slowly

moving very slowly from the youngest voice to the oldest from wherever, where I stand as a leader is to recognize the authenticity to interject my thoughts feelings or philosophies. Each person has become much in the same spirit – that everyone is included and moving from that place, we are now very slowly moving to the second stage of becoming a community.

About service to be enhance by our partnership with the Institute is the most critical part, the final piece in our circle of prayer – for it is in our circle of prayer that our Spiritual Transformation takes place and finally I want to lift up what the speakers have spoken about – an ancestralship – when I came into the community and I stood in the pulpit – I was overwhelmed by the presence of my ancestors and sat in the front row – and said girl you can do this – I could feel them so clearly – they were so evident in the congregation and sometimes I was afraid to walk to some places and I was afraid my congregation will to see me talking to my ancestors.

I had to acknowledge to my congregation that in our circle and congregation, there are other who are from my ancestors, that are around to helped me –the original ancestors of the church and they also started coming into the church and as I began to walk around the sanctuary, their presence allowed me out of my Africanness to begin and understand and to communicate with ancestors who were Caucasian who were the founders of the church and as I began to embrace and acknowledge them, we started to be a community of the living and the dead.

I went away and received a call from that – their parents had died 20 years ago and they wanted them to have funerals twenty years ago I received another call – European descent and because I made peace and acknowledged the and I told my

ancestors to talk to them something else happened, I received a telephone call in New Mexico that a member of the church had passed away and she was an African American who was married to a white man and they were the founding members of the church. Husband had died 20 years ago and the members did not know her –she was in a nursing home and she left her entire money to the church. We don't know what God's plan is. I am thankful for all the work of the Institute.

Rev. Atiemo

As a pastor in the Diaspora who has done some studies in the western model and also my thinking about TIDAC is the joy of knowing that some of the areas that I have been asking questions as I pastor people in the Diaspora. Four stories and then I will ask questions because some of my understanding is that culture is something that has two edges – some things that stay and some things that do not stay. The things which stay are more authentic and some of the things that do not stay may not be authentic.

There some things that are very important but do not stay – language in my church I preach in Twi and I preach in English and I realized that there are very few people who are Ghanaian who want to listen to a sermon in Twi but read thoroughly the English bible – whether that is good or not good I have to accept it as a fact and as a pastor, the person sitting there must benefit from the fact that I am pastoring them. I see thought patterns which change and thought patterns which remain and I cannot in fact say whether they are good or bad.

I have seen libation poured in America by people who are doing it and to me if I compare with the libation I saw poured in Africa, I wonder whether they are in a form of drama or whether they are serious about what they are doing and I have my own concerns

about libation from my Christian pastor perspective and that is simply related to my understanding of what it is. Basically I see it as prayer and because I see it as prayer, I want to see it as bringing results and that is part of my curiosity as a pastor what I am doing I want to see it bring some results and when I read Romans Chapter 8, and I hear that Jesus Christ is at the right hand interceding for us, I see the pastoral responsibility that has carried on after the resurrection and when I hear of the Holy Spirit interceding for me with size and rules which are beyond my thinking then I feel a sense of practicality beyond human psychology.

So I have the tendency to think that if I am a Christian a person who has Christ at the right hand of God interceding for me and the Holy Spirit interceding beyond my imagination, and thinking and if I think what my traditional pouring of libation is as prayer then think that that is a substitution for what my experience is in Romans chapter 8 – when I finish praying, I want something to happen – and Christ is alive my dear father and grandfather are not alive and that is the basic belief I came to in libation pouring a traditional practice which does not bring me the results that my Christian practice supported by Romans 8 for example .

The 4 stories – met a woman, last week who has come from Ghana a prayer center – an illiterate – had a spiritual experience as a result of that practical psychological thing called deliverance ministry practical theology that brings results – that is my understanding of deliverance ministry because in the worst practical theology – Christian psychological methods which have been stigmatized for PhD. This woman talks of a weird story that she dies, was put in the mortuary and there was some motion and so she was taken out and she said she had an experience in which she felt there were angels

from heaven that visited her. The angels said they would perform surgery on her she said she felt that they were taking her intestines and anything inside and then afterwards they told her that she was okay.

She said she opened her eyes and the doctors thought there was a miracle and since then she felt she had been endowed with spiritual understanding she comes from the church of the Pentecost. She reads scripture and has a tremendous ministry for people with psychological problems. All kinds of people – there is a lot of power. I went with her last week – there was this meeting of men which had been arranged in Tennessee by a gentleman who was concerned about not having the time to preach.

The friend that brought him was also in deliverance ministry and hoped the white folks needed deliverance. People would sit down and this illiterate person would come and say things and they would agree. You sat here and you did this – and this would be translated and then she would talk about demons following people and demonizing their efforts and their businesses, when thoughts she first was frightening them so I came up with the terminology – I told them that you are just being stalked and some kind of spiritual influence and she wants to pray for you.

I haven't been to houses that are so large and beautiful houses and each of the places we went to the thing about it was, when the people sat down and talked about the millions they have lost and this poor woman came and spoke, there was a sense of relief that you could get from a psychological session. In the two months, Dr. Smitts – wrote a book on forgiveness and on. One time he said Sam you come from Africa – you believe in demons and I said Professor Smitts, scripture tells us that there was a demoniac and it was Jesus who gave the diagnosis that the man was full of demons. The demons went

into the pigs and the pigs run into a body of water and the people were so furious, they came and told Jesus to pigs who'll remain in their state of rest or constant motion unless some force acts on them from the evidence – they ran into a body of water so there was a force – this is what the bible called demons and that is what I believe everybody was quiet in that class and he asked that question because I was a PhD psychology student.

To do theology and so I was ordained in to come to this church. He had expected me to describe other means of the demon possession. The idea of being a pastor to people is to be able to recognize that when they have an issue and there is someone who is gifted according to scripture by holy spirit gifts and called himself deliverance worker – there are some situations that as a pastor I cannot go – someone has to come and diagnose and pray – 1 Corinthians 12-14. I am a pastor and by the time the person has gone through my hands I wanted to feel they have been comprehensively been dealt with – comprehensive, useful and from the confrontation and all these from the scripture and the New Testament.

My other story comes from a dear brother who had died. The Sunday the 8th of March was Independence Day – we celebrated it and because we are Ghanaian we brought in some Ghanaian element and sang the Ghana national anthem etc now this gentleman was the one whom I knew to be vested in the culture and I had him into our worship which was music and some dancing. He went home after church service and he was hit by a hit and run driver, and he died two days later and so this morning I went to visit the widow and her daughter and after I sat down and we had talked about everything and how the person died. A young person of 23 years, born and raised here but in a home

in which her Dad had a lot of African cultural background. Infact they come from a family of chief and he could have become a chief but he refused.

She said; Pastor, my mum left me last August to attend choir meeting and when I was left with my dad, there was something that happened and I only had to pray – he was in the bath room and he was shouting the names of brothers and sisters back home – why are you killing me where is the crown coming from and when I went to the bathroom he was throwing everything on the ground – very distressed person and what I thought to do was to pray in the name of Jesus and then he calmed down and when he calmed down, he slept for a while and asked what is this that has happened and I said you were in a state of psychological frenzy – and as a pastor when a young person says this are something in the hospital but I believe my father has died as a result of some of these forces which are linked with the kind of background that I have as a pastor, there must be a practical solution to it.

I believe that TIDAC should help us come into some of the discussions which will be very fruitful and lead pastors like me when we look at culture, there is Christian culture emerging from the new testaments and it comes with color and it's available for me and for us right now. There is a culture in which I have been brought up and it has a certain level of culture and color and if I have to make a choice, I am making this choice because it works, it works at home and in the Diaspora. My grandfather on both sides, my wife's father was a catechist they wanted to make him a chief at Larteh; (at that time the level of understanding in the Presbyterian church was so low), they caught a sheep, killed it and poured the blood on his feet and because of that, they would not ordain him as a minister because traditional rites had been performed on him and so he would not be

able to become a chief in Larteh and the Presbyterian Church said he cannot become a minister. He also said he was not going to become a chief because he would be in a situation in which he would be required to do a number of things.

My own grandfather – the story I came to see – we belong to the same family – same grandfather – but my grandfather was the senior presbyter in the church and he felt that being in that particular position, he could not become a chief. The chief is now occupied by someone with a deeper understanding but his view was that if he was to promote everything that was powerful – abosom – the family gods, he would not be able to do it as a Presbyterian. He preferred Christ church so he didn't do and so this is the character in which I have become a pastor in the Diaspora. We have brought some of the notions – what of the culture can we change and what of the culture do we give away and what of the culture do we say – okay it is powerful and seeks batteries put into something to light a torch light, but from the powerful – it is as powerful and the demons and some things will go and some things will remain.

I decry the fact that some of our children don't speak Twi and speak it properly and when we were raising our boys we decided that when you enter the house you speak Twi but the first time my second son when we took a trip home and he saw his grandma had water on a stove, he said something like this – the water is cooking and then grandma said water doesn't cook, water boils. I see that a lot of our children have to if we need to get them to the richest part of the culture which is the language then we have a long way to go and as a pastor, I hope TIDAC will help us since it has to do with Diaspora. This is the pastor's professional curiosity.

Prof. Mercy's rejoinder:

It's been a rich sharing- one story/issue set in Winneba – Simpa way back when, an issue which rubbed me the wrong way. Spoof Gharthey, a prominent Methodist minister was to be made king – and so what was the church to do – the church wanted someone prominent like him in socio-political leadership but the church knew it had gone out and openly disapproved some of the things that goes into the king-making process so are they going to say yes or no to Rev. Gharthey becoming King Gharthey? The compromise was this – Rev. Gharthey was going to become King Gharthey but when they bring the deer that is caught prior to the enthronement and the sacrificing the deer the blood will not be poured on his feet – reflecting on this I said well then I don't think he is king because he hasn't gone through the rituals.

That was my dramatic conclusion but on second thought I said he has participated in the ritual and approved of the ritual by his very presence. What I am trying to say is that sometimes we will see this religion and culture Christianity and culture as a non issue and there are other times that we have to struggle with it, until we get the nugget where the compromise will be where we need to honor both the identity and authenticity and also be able to go into the process of becoming a community. So the first issue is what we have repeated that we have to speak to each person and each group's identity in order that we might become a community; honor the authenticity on each group and each people towards becoming a community.

Second we have to see the issue as a very complicated conversation. There are no easy answers. Sometimes I think why are we bothering our children with learning the

different languages – Ga or Fante why do they have to read the Ga and Fante bibles? If you ask me most of the translations do not make sense because the people who were translating into the mother tongue didn't know Hebrew, they were translating from King James. If you give me a passage to read in church and I have to read it in Fante or Twi, I practice before I come to church to read, but give me any passage in English and I will read it at any time. So why am I forcing the reading on my children – what is the use? That will be one way of facing our language issue – but then if you think that you don't know your language then there is some question mark about whether you know your culture, whatever you know where you are coming from whether you are not going to be dancing to other people's tunes because you yourself have no tune in your head and then you are not going to be very creative either.

So we have a very complicated conversation on our hands in the Institute. There are no foregone conclusions – my sister introducing me said I took a very unusual path – more than unusual even among the men because there are very few men in Ghana with an intermediate DD from London and I don't think there is another woman in Ghana who has that. I can bet there is no African who has tricots part three in Dogmatics from Cambridge because when I went to do that my supervisors said – please this is part of theology that people come here to do and usually they don't pass and we don't want you to come all the way from Africa and fail. I felt it was racism and or sexism – Dogmatics did one thing for me I don't want to be dogmatic – telling people what it is to believe and what to believe in. I want them to believe that will lead them to lead the kind of life we are all trying to achieve whatever else we do our dogmatic statements should not be on

the platform as what people should believe – but it should be on the platform as what we should all debate.

Prof Kofi's rejoinder:

I will tell a story I was in the Gambia recently and I think the Institute in its vision of its work, goes back to five African proverbs that most or all of us know but I think but at this formal situation, we need to restate to guide the institute in its operations. The institute has been guided by the notion of free flow of ideas in our tradition we have one proverb – the spider did not sell speech because if the spider had sold speech, only the wealthy would have had the means to buy speech but speech is free that is why we have the proverb – everyone is free to express themselves.

The proverb that Dale quoted that wisdom is not in one person's head – he swears that he will never do anything without consulting his elders – he can be removed from office because he did not take the advice of his elders and so we have a proverb that other people's wisdom prevents the chief from being called a fool because he takes advice and listens to advice.

One must come out of one's house to begin learning – all learning is like taking steps away from our familiar surroundings and this comes out of our individuals experiences of being toilet trained and leaving our houses to go to school and cleaning the garden and discovering that everything is different outside the house and that sets into motion the process of learning.

If you have not been outside of your house you cannot say your mother's soup is the best. Most of us haven't been anywhere besides one authority but there are other

cooks besides your mother and it's by traveling and experiencing that you broaden your experiences.

Thirdly, a proverb about this tree that you have here – the baobab tree – or the upside down tree. The reason is that when you look at the tree from a distance it looks like it's been turned upside down and the roots are in the sky and the branches are in the ground but it's all because according to our stories it was planted by the hyena. The creator called all the animals together and received a seedling and went into the forest to plant and finally the hyena received the seedling from the creator and sewed it upside down – but it's a very powerful tree and truth is like a baobab's tree and one person's arm cannot embrace it. There is no human being whose arms are long enough to embrace it. It's what wisdom and knowledge is like.

I was in the Gambia recently in July and there was a discussion between Muslims Christians and Traditionalists and I had to represent the traditionalists. We spoke about truth from the sacred scriptures and so on and I quoted this proverb – that our ancestors said that truth is like a baobab tree –to walk out of this room to walk to the baobab tree out there to put your arms around it and if you do not succeed, and I invite you advocates of truth you go to the origin of where your sacred scriptures come from and until I see a human being with arms long enough to put their hands around the baobab tree, I will still recognize the wisdom of my ancestors of course but the human appropriation of God's truth – we must recognize our inability to fully embrace the baobab tree of God is not a weakness but it's a singularly acceptance that God is God and we are human beings with our limitations.

The fourth has to do with the eye – it says however big one eye may be two are better. We have binocular vision because we have two eyes. Hunt in every forest for there is wisdom in good hunting in all of them. Every religious tradition call it paganism or fetishism every religious and cultural tradition has something has something to learn from and it is being intellectually adventurous and to look everywhere does not reflect a lack of faith in our own on the contrary; it is by looking around that we arise deep in our understanding of our own.

And so we believe that the Institute coming out of our own traditions has to embrace perspective of looking at the world intellectually adventurous and asking questions in dialogue with ourselves and everybody and its through this exercise that we can increase our understanding that we can acknowledge ourselves and our culture of the beings we profess to worship; and so I come just briefly to 2 or 3 points after all in our traditions we have a proverb that says we finish eating but we never finish talking.

We can always talk one of the proverb says the hole in the ear is never filled so you always want to hear more, certainly there are other Africans who because they have been taught by Europeans who totally accept the European interpretation. It is their choice but certainly they must keep all of African and we sometimes even make the mistake of speaking for all Africa when we make statements but of course African is such a large continent and things may be quite different from one country to the other and we live in Ghana, for instance – in many of our communities the first of the twins is the elder of the twin.

In other communities the second of the twin is the elder – it is related to the Yoruba also but both have come out of the African experience – they may be differences

but they have both come out of the African experience and so you find people who always reflect the training and education of the European and all of us reflect those who have come under some kind of influence after all we say when you get a hold of a snake's head the rest of the body is a mere string and as they say when you control a man's mind and you could have the man or the woman and so it's the control of our minds. The freeing of the vines – the freeing of the vine from the shackles of whatever it is that we have been subjected to.

A word about libation – libation – Rev. Atiemo was talking about results – of course I don't think people will engage in some cultural or religious practice for generations on end fruitlessly when there is nothing coming out of it. Libation needs to be studied from all the perspectives that come together under that rubric because libation is an expression of the belief that when you die, you are not dead that death does not end your life so all of our ancestors who are dead are still part of us. In my own family, two years ago one of my sisters died – I have always poured libation that does not mean I do not believe in God or Jesus because to me this is a way of relating to the dead our way of talking to them. I asked the members of my family who oppose to it – we will not allow this to be done in this house.

Have anyone spoken to Nana Opoku – No do you think just because you go to church – to talk to them to recognize them to give food to them does not mean you do not believe in Christ – I am not condemning you for believing in that so please let me be a member of this family and do what you don't want to do. I do and I do that on your behalf – well you don't represent me – but when I speak to them they know, we have issues and we have to delve in let me simply say that we are at a very exciting moment in

our cultural, social, religious history as we embark on this Institute – we are not claiming Nobel peace but at least we are making an effort in our own way and in a fresh and dynamic way of bringing people together discussing these issues and making our own small contribution.

The second panel discussions

Catechist Aboah-Offei

Greetings from my community in Akropong and greetings from my church – I am so excited about TIDAC and what TIDAC is doing. I am most especially pleased with the symbol of Baobab tree – as Prof was saying – no one person can ever embrace the fullness of the baobab – if it is small fine but sometimes they can grow as wide as 36 feet in diameter. My thinking of TIDAC is the thinking of the Baobab – it is all over the place in Africa – it is deep rooted so TIDAC should be deep-rooted the roots are so deep rooted. My grandfather always said to me that there is a deeper depth than deepness. There are so many issues we consider ordinary but when we go beyond the ordinary depth, we find that it's not so ordinary. Looking at the war in Sierra Leone, the Muslims would say it was not normal. When we got involved it was a religious war. The deity – when they were possessed with it that was why the war go deeper may we go deeper because if I consider last month I was in Tanzania about the sacrifice albinos.

It is deeper in religion than what we think it be social – let TIDAC be deeper like when Babalayo was sacrificing people and we heard of a lady who had run away – had the impression of fasting on Thursday and Friday and she has been chloroformed and taken to a Babalayo shrine. Something happened – the shrine said there was something about her that I cannot sacrifice her. Quickly we heard it in Ghana and we went to get

her and bring her back. I wanted to know what was going in the shrine. TIDAC should go deeper into our traditions. Atiemo was saying something because as a pastor he has gone deeper than other people have. My grandfather will always tell me if you don't involve yourself, you cannot advance – May TIDAC begin to make us know our selves better, know about other societies so we can become a community.

TIDAC should be like the baobab tree and dig deeper – if you go deeper; you will help the people better. A baobab has a fibrous stem which was used to make clothing during the dry season. May TIDAC come out with the baobab fibrous bark to cover our nakedness, may TIDAC begin to grow! The baobab tree can be used for so many things such as vegetables – may TIDAC have that. When there is no vegetable in the savannah region, the baobab is available. May TIDAC be the baobab for us! Baobab has the fruits – I love the fruits, they are juicy but there is one miracle with it. Once you eat the Baobab it impedes your test bank. May TIDAC feed us so that we will be satisfied to run longer races than ordinary! May TIDAC not be ordinary! If I see the baobab tree, the roots are difficult to be established but once it is established, it is difficult to eradicate. That is why only the hyena can establish it – someone who is too stupid to appreciate the difficulty but as soon as it is established it is very difficult for someone to blow it off its feet.

Brothers and sisters when it comes to the African community the baobab tree is a place for people to sit under for a rest. People run there for rest from the sun, heat, so may people run from disturbances to hide under TIDAC! My thinking about TIDAC is that it should not only be a resting place but be the gate of the community, a gate to the community. A good observation of African Traditional Religion is when someone is

going to be buried; something happens whenever they get to the baobab tree – as soon as they get to the baobab tree, the people carrying the coffin cannot move again –for whatever reason they cannot move till something is done before they can move because – it can be libation, it can be kind of a statement, but something should be done before you can move because it is the gate of the community because the dead body does not want to leave the community, the people cannot move unless the spirit is persuaded to move.

It is the gate of the community and at the gate of the community we open for the positive and the negative. May the negatives of the community be ushered out, out of the gate and may the negative coming be stopped but May we begin to embrace the positive that is coming to the community! If TIDAC has the symbol of baobab may we accept the positive and may we drive away the negative. When I was young because I was brought up in an African Traditional palace, if there is any trouble in the community, all the ladies will go out nude at night and no man should see them, but I would go and hide and I will see all the women carrying wood and they will put everything at the gate of the community trying to drive away the negative.

May we begin as TIDAC, may we begin to push away the negative in all discussions done at the gate – it's all inclusive, they ask everyone to the gate – all issues are brought there; wars are generated at the gate and peace is generated beneath the baobab. May we begin to generate peace and not war at the baobab at the gate of the community! If I look at the root of the baobab – it's the most vigorous root you can think of in the African Traditional community. The baobab has vigorous roots and its so vigorous it can cover a long distance in connectivity; may TIDAC be so connected to many communities and societies and not only be localized but I want to see real

connectivity – Africans, Whites, Chinese and everybody is my thinking for TIDAC. My thinking for TIDAC is the thinking of the ultimate of the baobab when there is an altar established beneath the baobab that the people go and worship and learn about God under the Baobab – may we know God and know God better under the baobab – may we understand God better under the baobab – may TIDAC give us much information about God that we serve – there are so many theological schools in Ghana and Africa as you travel extensively around the continent, there are so many bible schools, at times I call them Biblists because they study only a small portion of the bible but they call themselves a bible school.

May TIDAC not be one of the many ordinary Bible schools but may TIDAC be a school of much information – information about ourselves and information about others, information about our culture – that information will make us understand ourselves better, information that will make us know what is what. We look at the issues of the people and we get information about the people before we start treatment. Yes some people may come and want you to perform but there are realities May TIDAC not be an ordinary school but may TIDAC go into issues with deeper meaning and understanding. May TIDAC teach us about the God that we serve!

We have been brought up in the ATR – our grandfathers have been traditional that was my mother's side and my father's side were German trained German bred Presbyterians – very organized, very strict, uncompromising – regimental kind of religion – military minus Marx strict military – my mother side were strict practitioners of ATR so when I go to my grandfather on my mother's side I was confused and when I run to my father's side I was also confused.

My mother would say – don't mind them – I did not know whether to follow my father, strict well-dressed with the European hat – tall elegant Christian with regimental bible reading behaving like the Whiteman but there was something that threw me for a loop. My grandfather on my mother side told me that I will assert myself and that I will be accepted. He was a demonstrator of so much power and he said I am leaving all these things and I will follow what your father's side is doing. So where are all these powers and if that man at the point realized that there is a superpower that he wants to serve then there is a greater power. He was baptized and he became a Christian and he informed us about some of the negatives of what he was doing.

That is why I want TIDAC to get the people well-educated to an appreciated level and understand the culture. He got so excited – this is a lie, this is a fetish, this is excitement, because I have a little understanding of my culture with the lens of Christ, I could understand it better now. If TIDAC is baobab and a baobab is the foundation of African society, may TIDAC go to the foundations of people and foundations of issues and May TIDAC not be ordinary as any ordinary plant in Africa! – Good bless you.

Rev. Kirk Lyons

It is wonderful to see so many of the individuals that I met on my two trips to Ghana congregating in the same room – it is a wonderful thing. I want to begin by describing the church that I visited. Upon entering the church 1st thing I saw in front of the lectern was a small gimlet drop the next thing I noticed right of the lectern was a huge gimlet drop – at the rear of the church was a huge core that was taped to the wall was the Adinkra symbol. When I saw the pastor come out he was dressed like the way Prof Opoku is wearing – during the procession as the congregation stood. The procession was

African dancing and it was one of the most beautiful sights to find myself in a Presbyterian church that was so African.

The interesting thing was this church was in Georgia and when I saw displayed in this church and what I heard was startling because in the invocation, they called out the names of twenty names for God in various African tongues and they talked about authenticity and recognition of these names for God in these African tongues. I asked the question why have we abandoned these languages and these expressions of God and limited ourselves to particular cultures – names and understanding of God. Every year, the church goes on what they call a “heritage walk” where they remember their ancestors. Yes I say Georgia – this was the type of church I was looking for in Ghana because of course part of the work I am doing for Christian assemblies that have retained the vestiges of their African culture.

No the question that has to be asked when did negotiating our faith and culture become a problem for us – when did it become problematic? The answer is simple when you have someone else outside of your culture feeding your faith and dismissing your native culture as inferior or less than, and evil and non-Christian and so then those of us that find ourselves adherents of Christianity are now left with this conundrum – how do we work with this balancing act of being authentically? Am I not abandoning my ancestry and yet embracing this religion on the teachings of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.? It is a tight wire balancing act but this congregation in Georgia seems to be liberated more so than any of the churches I visited in Ghana which was surprising to me.

I remembering having a conversation with Prof. Opoku and I was describing some of the churches I had already visited and spoken to the pastor that were involved in

the negotiating this - talking about a christening that I had gone to – again in a Presbyterian church and part of the services was libation and recognizing the ancestors of the baby that was being dedicated to church during this service. We talked about Trinity in Chicago – a church that publishes that they are authentically Christian and unashamedly African and that you see both of those things when you enter into the church, the house of the Lord Church in Brooklyn that for 20 years has had a monumental black messiah hang up to show that some of us see Christ in imagery that mirrors ourselves. I talked about spending 6 months traveling in Europe and looking at churches – the oldest churches that I visited had images of Christ that were as dark as and darker than me that I had not seen such a phenomenon in the United States of America.

Paul actually gave us a model that we have abandoned or ignored. You see Paul's work was generally to these defeated nations and his ministry to these defeated nations he came up against opposition that was teaching the people in these congregations that they had to abandon their culture and take on the culture of another people in order to be called the people of God.

As a matter of fact you have to take the tribal marks of the people re – circumcision – as a matter of fact, you could not eat things according to the way you are eat in your culture but you must take on their dietary laws and where you are used to worshipping God but you must follow the laws of Shabbat and keep the Sabbath holy. Paul did some very controversial things- he said I am not going to tell you to abandon the law but these three things in particular are things that divide us and not unite us and so you who are coming in representing a different culture you don't have to take on the

tribal markings; you can retain them. You don't have to forgo your diet and take on the laws of Kashrut; you can retain your own.

You don't have to follow the Shabbat but you can worship God where and when you are used to worshipping God and still authentically acquire the people of God – he took it a step further and in the baptismal ritual, when people were baptized, they had to sign on to something and the statement was there is no longer Jew or Greek there is no longer male or female slave or free but it did not mean that these people ceased to be these things; it meant that there is no hierarchical order when you are baptized in Christ.

That the slave is no less than the free person that the Jew or Greek had precedence over the other. That the males can no longer lord it over the females – this is what you sign on to when you go through the ritual of initiation and think about how just and controversial it was because it wasn't the form of initiation that acknowledged and separated men from women but it was the initiation of what they considered the weaker sex because everybody can go through ritual bathing of baptism not just the males.

So Paul set the order of what the New Testament churches looked like but something happened between the road to the Gaul and today – because when I look at our churches, I see that what we have inherited is Christianity that by and large represents a particular culture as opposed to representing the multicultural ancestry of all people who call themselves Christians so what that does – because you know every project needs a quest; every project needs a problem they need to address.

This is what I see is the problem that faces this Institute and we have just begun to scratch the surface and those of us who may not totally agree theologically but are sitting at the table together; we even come on our knees together; we are allowing ourselves to

be challenged with the beliefs that we have walked into the room and we are asking the hard questions of each other particularly why have we abandoned all of the things that we have ever known? Because we were told to, but now we are revisiting this and we are going to face these questions on our own terms and come to our own conclusions and I think we are going to find some very surprising answers and conclusions that may be a little uncomfortable for some people but we need to keep the model that Paul established for the early New Testament Christians.

Don't abandon your culture by default in order to be Christian. God doesn't expect you to cease being who you are – this teaching of his was so much more inclusive than the exclusivity of Judaism – he was breaking new grounds and it was very uncomfortable for some people who would come from behind and undo the work he had done but in fact it was so liberating for people who found themselves on the outside looking in and not having a seat at the table prior to this and so we are here today and look forward to the day when I can experience what I experienced in Lithonia Georgia.

In Ghana, in South Africa, in Nigeria when I made my trips to these places to see Christians who have not thrown out the baby with the bath water, because every culture has things that they need to look at to see if they can reconcile it with their faith. Every culture not just African cultures but every culture and one of the things we have to do is we have to go beyond having this conversation with ourselves – the conclusions we reach we need to share it with the world. So my suggestion is, we need to embark on a vigorous publishing campaign, to increase our audience wider than the individuals that are blessed to make these voyages to Ghana with us; but for those that are not able to make the trip, somehow we have to share our findings; we have to include them in our

conversations and bless them in a way that those who have been involved in the project so far have been blessed by these conversations.

One of the most troubling things in the research I have been doing that I discovered last summer – I am looking at slave catechisms to see how mainline denominations have used sacred texts to justify slavery and to basically condition those who are Christians to be good slaves whatever the definition of a good slave is. But last summer beyond that I got to look at the archives of the missionaries – very interesting – now that I have made some trips to Africa, I wanted to see some of what the missionaries from the Basel mission that landed in Akropong and other places in West Africa to read some of the things they were writing back home – what were they thinking about the people and their culture in West Africa- there was a questionnaire that was sent out to the various stations – and the questionnaire asked all sorts of questions about the people that the missionaries encountered and the aim of the questionnaire was to determine what do you allow people to do that are members of your congregation and what do you demand that they cease to do?

They had this long list of things – uniform and a lot of the very things we were discussing now these things that fall under the rubric of fetishes; or how was the term put when we had our workshop – ‘petty, petty things’ and I was trying to get at it – what are these “petty, petty things”? Let’s talk about these things – what are they? Don’t push them under the rug because the missionaries had pre-determined that there were a lot of things going on in their culture that we had to get rid of in order to authenticate these individuals as Christians. They came into this enterprise with this predisposition instead of trying to understand this culture, they came with the baggage of their own culture and

said in order to be a Christian this is what you do and this is what you don't do because everything outside these set of rules are not Christian and in fact most of them were termed demonic. We need to revisit a lot of these things and ask those questions all over again.

It is so interesting to have churches plant themselves in an area and never truly address the greatest emergencies that the people are facing. I was in a vigorous conversation about the popularity of Pentecostalism in African and Asia – with a lot of impoverished other world countries and the individual actually gave me a lecture and said he couldn't understand the booming is it simply just emotionalism – I let him go on and waited and asked him about how many people had demonic possessions like the Pentecostal churches? How many of the other churches dealt with divine healing?

You bring a bible into the community that shows these things happening but then you build a religious community that totally ignores this and then you wonder why a particular type of church is connecting with the people; because they deal with what we call deliverance, they deal with what we call divine healing. These needs exist so these are just a couple of the conversations that I will recommend that we have that are gathered here. These are a couple of things I think we need to take apart, dissect, so that we bless ourselves and bless our communities and we become a part of the bridge that helps people to reconnect to home because there is no place like home.

Dr. Wanda Lundy – Amma Akuffo

I call on our ancestors because it is because of them that we are here and so I want to acknowledge the ancestors who are here with us now – they are smiling and challenging us. What I would like to share is very brief – I am honored to be a part of the

Institute – the birth of this Institute through its father – brother Kwaku, Rev Daniel, its timely. I would like to center my remarks about a hallmark card. This is a card: “I am African not because I was born in Africa but because Africa was born in me”. This card was given to me in 2007 by another D. Min student and it has become part of the mantra that I have. I can’t tell you the country of my ancestors is in Africa – I don’t know – and for all of my life I have longed to know where my home was; and the thing that just crystallized for me while I was in Ghana in December was that I am not afraid.

That meant that at some point I have been afraid – many of us are afraid we are afraid of the truth. When I went to the slave castle and I stood and saw the slave castles that our ancestors were placed I was in so much turmoil and the spirits said to me as I was watching that picture: “but those shackles are no longer around your neck, wrists and feet” and it was at that point that the inner self and me said there is nothing to be afraid of. I wanted to go to the shrine – I wanted to know who I am. There are two things Harriet Tubman said, she knew two things that she had a right to: one was freedom and the other one was death and she will take either one.

And that is why I believe that I have the right to know who I am as an African person and so that is why I refuse to allow anyone or anything to stop me from the gift that God has given me so what does it mean that I am not afraid – I am not afraid to question the fact that I am a Christian – I don’t believe that questioning whether I am a Christian or not is going to make me any lesser or anymore but may infact bring me closer to God helping me to understand who I am and that is important for me because much of our experience is because we are Christians. The things that I hold on to are that

I am a Christian and I look through the lens of being a Christian but what if there was something before then?

I remember during the D. Min study, hearing about what happened in the 16th and 17th century all over everywhere except in Africa – do you mean there was nothing happening in Africa? Something is missing for me and the gift and the joy that I have is that I can discover those missing parts and so when I go Ghana and my brother says you are home – that means a lot to me – it's more than there is no place like home!

Understanding that so many of us in this country have a home and in addition not given the permission to find out where home is and when you try, there are so many questions. No leave me alone allow me to experience the African experience that God has allowed me to be.

Somewhere in Africa on that soil, my ancestors came out of and I should have the right to experience this for myself. For me the Institute is an opportunity for those who feel the same way as I do to go to Africa to do so. I had gone to Ethiopia it was a little different – but when I went to Ghana, it was like being home. It was God that provided Daniel and this opportunity for me to be a part of the Institute so that we have the opportunity to experience the more serious aspects of the culture than the average person who goes to Ghana as tourists. And I thank God for that and I hope that we will all be able to produce that opportunity for many, many people.

I am African not because I can tell you which country my ancestors came from, I am African because Africa is in me. I am African and I have a brother who calls me his sister who is African – my brother is a chief and that makes me happy – it's not a lot but its more than some people have given me so I just want to encourage us as an Institute –

yes we need to be inclusive; but we also need to give ourselves permission to find out who we are without feeling like we are excluding someone else and I will close by affirming something that the brother said – if we don't know who we are, we cannot take anyone anywhere we haven't been – and most of us do not know who we are we just know what someone had told us.

If I had grown up in a Muslim community then I would have been Islamic so if I could have been Christian just as I could be, I could easily have been practicing ATR why cannot I discover that ATR – because of fear? Because someone is afraid, because of fear and so I give thanks for the opportunity to discover and if does not happen this way, then God is going to allow it rise another way. So I thank God for Prof. Opoku and he comes in a gentle way and says yes but what about this proverb? You know the amazing thing at looking at the Lord's supper and the Asafosa Peace Ritual that was there 500 years before Christianity came that looks like the same thing – the challenge for us to really discover even as Christians this thing that we believe where did it come from?

Where are these stories coming from? Are we really embracing something that is ours already anyway but somebody took it away from us and gave it back to us as if it came from them? That is when we start getting to the real truth of the matter and the challenge for us is not to be afraid because as long as one of us is hurting, is lost, does not know who we are, we are all lost and until we can all be honest and experience and discover this truth then we are all living a lie. So I thank God for Hallmark – this happens to be the mahogany line of Hallmark and I believe that Maya Angelou helped kick that of – I am African not because I was born in Africa but because Africa was born in me.

Rev. Dr. Felix Busby:

I don't think I have much to say because everyone has said it already – it's strange though that I am from the island of Curacao small little island and there is something I have experienced, have seen but never understood – we are talking about libation. Every time you go to a party, christening, wedding and they open a bottle of liquor – do you know what they do? Some for the spirits – I wonder why? Where did that come from I was asking? Until finally I was pastoring the Ghanaian church for about 3 years and I heard about libation, and I saw and experienced what libation was about and I understood but I also have questions – if an island in Curacao that is not in Africa could adapt such a culture, this ritual, then I would like to look deeper into where it came that I could truly understand what was happening.

It is interesting also to find whether that the Apostle Paul was standing with this group when he said – I will be all things to all people – what does that mean? He did not distinguish some part but all people. I think that TIDAC is going to try and answer those questions – be all things to all people – Many might be mad and angry and may not accept it – so be it but many I think will gain from the knowledge – there are so many things that we need to know especially being African in a way.

I remember going to the Cameroon I was going there for about 6 months for business – I had a driver and he used to call me Mr. and Sir and I told him to cut it out don't call me that because it's possible that you could have been where I am at and I be where you are at – not because from New York or America – we are all the same. But then I understood that, that is part of their culture – to respect other folk especially if you come from this soil of American they want to pay homage to you but I believe deep down

in my heart that this did not begin haphazardly – it is something that God wanted us to know.

I truly believe that because I did my thesis for my Doctorate on solitude and silence. In solitude and silence, many Christian people “I always tend to take that term loosely being Christ-like but are we really being Christ-like – what I have learned – through the research, is to learn to know yourself – know not this face or this stature or the clothes that you wear but know what the eye within you is and if you learn who the eye within you is, then you can love your brothers and sisters the way God loves us.

For Jesus said in John 17: I am in you and you in me and let them be in us the way we are in each other and so the only way we can learn with each other is to be one with each other. I am the pastor of the Canarsie Reformed Church and the reason why I am so involved in this is Rev. Nyante did his internship at my church and we spoke a lot and when he was telling me what his dream was, I said go for it and if I can help you in any way – I will do. We have to thank God and Rev. Nyante and we will make this happen. We will make believer out of those who are non-believers that there are certain things in life – no-one knows God’s mind – His mind is way beyond others and I don’t think God created Africa of non existence, there had to be something there for us to learn and we will learn. God bless you.

Dr. Lois Gehr Livezey

Mostly I feel blessed to have been here it’s been a marvelous conversation and I should tell you how I got into this position and told Dale – I am coming to this and I am excited about this Institute and I want to learn and Dale in his generous spirit said I will put you in the panel and this was not the position to be in but I am grateful to be here. I am grateful and I say thank you to Daniel and this is a great opportunity to explore issues

of culture and Diasporan culture and a number of you have broadened that out. My role actually at NYTS is the director is the Global Project and the Rev. Nyante has already agreed to be one of the panelists in the discussion there next October and I can assure you that most of you will be invited to this and hopefully many of you can be lured into it.

It's called Religion in A Global City, Faith, Justice, Action and number of these kinds of issues we are going to be discussed although I have to say that often discussions of global conference will be a good and bad example of that. Our very concern with of the dynamics of globalization and urbanization and the question of a city like New York City that we are going to focus on – not just New York city but cities across the world. Often it does not pay much attention to one of the important dynamics of globalization and that is culture and about issues of identity, diversity, hybridity all the kinds of things you've been talking about here and how that becomes a very complex issue.

I love the discussion on the baobab tree. That is supposed to be for us to talk about conventionally and too wide to get our arms around but the way you've woven that around voice and the diversity of voices and how then do we create faithful and effective communities. What are the dilemmas of our community building? I believe it was Mercy Oduyoye that said that out of that comes out the question of ethics – this is my field – I was very interested and one of the issues – how does this very important globalize cultural discussion become part of the framework that we talk about when we talk about what I call 'globalization'. A globalization that has some capacity for justice which in some days is very difficult to see?

So I am just really delighted to be here and delighted you are here and delighted this conversation is on-going. One of the things I told Rev. Nyante was the irony was

yesterday before I talked to Dale – I had a long conversation with a colleague is following up the globalization conference as a follow – up why don't we talk about culture and identity within this framework of globalization? Mainly I just want to say this has been extraordinarily fruitful for me – I wish you every bit of God's grace in carrying on with God's conversation and may you be blessed in doing it. Thank you.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION

Dr. Cynthia Diaz –

Celebrate every voice that has been lifted up. How does The Institute as it unfolds how does it touch the people in the pews in my congregation both here and in Africa how do we embrace the Institute in a way that it continues to effect change and lift up the consciousness of those who are interested and those who have never even thought about the issues that have been raised here today.

Rev. Dan Nyante –

Typically we will have a newsletter which will come out monthly and there will be a website and trips to Africa to do series of lectures and delve into dialogues and communication with other people and what they know about the culture and all the traditions. So it's a series of activities which will involve other communities that have substance.

Kirk Lyons

One other thing is even in our individual spaces in the work we are doing – for me is to take advantage of the opportunity to influence people – the course in which I met Daniel is being offered again in June and that work will continue with the students

introducing these ideas. And the Institute will try to highlight these discussions so people can come down and participate in these discussions.

Participant

So those of us who were born on the African continent before we came here – we have a lot of things we are wrestling in even as we want to incorporate some of our culture into our churches we are not sure of some of them. Does it mean that the Institute will help us draw clear lines of where the boundaries will be because sometimes even though some of them are beautiful to watch, sometimes we are also not too sure if they should be part of church culture? We are not sure so as we wrestle with these things ourselves. The Institute should help us make things clear even if we are incorporate them in our churches; that we do them in such a way that celebrates our culture and inspires others to want to be a part of it.

Rev. Dan Nyante

Typically the Institute will do that. When we meet to dialogue we can always find a common ground where this will be of benefit to each other. Having people who know of the specific issues, spotlight on them and help us put it into perspective is important; no one person will have the full knowledge of what is happening in a specific location. Sharing and contributing will help us have a good grounding.

Prof Mercy:

What the gentleman just said we are always talking about these “petty, petty things” but we never name them. So it’s not a question of what the Institute is going to do but a question of what we are doing together; because if there are questions in your mind, if there are things if you are not sure whether you should do or not – those things

should be on the website and in the newsletter we will raise it openly so we can all delve into it.

Rev. Dan Nyante

We will have a website and we will have an email address where you can send questions to us that we can delve into. If you have any questions we will be more than willing to work with you.

Participant:

I came in for just a third of the program but I will walk away very enriched but my question for you is how will the Institute reach out to people of other faith traditions? I am in the D. Min multi faith track and I am Muslim but nonetheless everything that you have said today refers to me particularly in terms of my own African heritage so I would like to know how we will all participate.

Rev. Dan Nyante

TIDAC is a multi faith institute it's not specifically for one denomination so we are open – the next group of students that the Institute will be sponsoring we have Hajara who is also Muslim and as a matter of fact when we had the winterim session she went with us and we had wonderful discussions with her. On the other hand we found out later that when we went to the shrine, she had to go, take off her clothes to wash them - we did not know that going with us would have some ramifications in her religion.

Kofi Koranteng

We are a people of high emotion – at times like these there are a lot of emotion with these great ideas of the Institute and coming from a business background how can we put this in a form – when we hit grassroots, how can we package this in a form that

will not be seen as threatening but be understood at a level that has the expectation that we want – and it gets very tricky because we have all different groups who have experienced African heritage. People who want to go back and being moved by the spirit – but we have to be very structured – I have to get an understanding of how this structure will be – 3-part of 4 parts – If you take someone from the street is there raising an awareness etc for example.

Rev. Dan Nyante

It will come from people like you – As Prof. Mercy said, no one person has all the answers.

Cynthia Diaz

The Lord placed Dr. Lomax in my life – we shared our stories my introduction is grounded.

Prof. Opoku

I have been to Prof. Lomax's church and what I told the congregation was that I was bringing you greetings from Africa and our ancestors but after seeing you before I speak I am taking your greetings to Africa. Their confidence was simply overwhelming. Some of us have been bred into us an element of fear to see this church so liberated. The people in the Congo say: "The person who is in touch with his or her origins is a person who will never die". Before the hybrid could be recognized we need to be friendly and still have the confidence to participate – I have been greatly encouraged by this workshop keep your interest and to be part of this interesting and exciting part of this movement. This Institute cannot go any further without your participation.

Dr. Dale Irvin

A bit of a shift on Institutional things then talk about fundraising but no offering because we won't ask you to put money in here. I would like to do a bit of institutional work – Eva will be passing around a list for you to sign if you want to go upstairs after the workshop to eat. We have food donated by Christ Apostolic Church – I know you are hungry, I am hungry we'll go upstairs to eat but to get a building pass you need to sign in. Eva went to get a sign in sheet.

Institution building and add to the conversation that was going on about the work of the Institute. Much of the work will be in partnership and will take place in NY with NYTS one of the 1st roles is simply educational in nature. I will tell a story of my own in 1986 I was teaching in the college of New Rochelle, a fabulous woman Sis. Rosina Ampah now a priest at St. Phillip's Episcopal Church down in Atlanta – she was a member of the Sister of St. Helena's was planting convents across Ghana and a spiritual and traditional healer I asked her to come to my class in World Religions.

I had read about ATR in books and asked her to come to my evening lecture and she said I have to pour libation before I come to start the class and you the teacher, you must provide the libation and what do I provide, I asked and she said a bottle of gin – it's the closest to the traditional Ghanaian alcohol. So I brought a bottle of gin but unfortunately it was an opened bottle of gin – she looked at this and did not say a thing. She started to pour libation by saying: "Oh ancestors please forgive him; he is a Whiteman he didn't know and don't kill him on his way home". I know I will never ever forget the lesson about how you pour libation.

Sometimes you learn things only by being there and experiencing them and that is an important piece of this institute's learning so part of what we will be doing is programs here in NY and will be bringing together of theologians and partly be taking place in West Africa next week Dr. Lundy and Dr. Patrick Provost-Smith; Patrick will arrive in New York about 12 midnight – I will be going in June with Elaine Padilla, Dr, Leslie Callahan and we will be joined by Dr. Akin Agunloye who teaches in Qatar and I am sure by the time this comes out there will be about 12 or so people to join Prof. Mercy and Prof. Opoku– we will be bringing students from NYTS who will be doing two weeks of learning and we also expect to be teaching there each person is expected to do some teaching for the African students .

The institutional work will go beyond – reason I missed the African - US connection – part of this afternoon I was upstairs preparing a summer program for 15 Korean pastors who will be here from Korea and around the rest of the world and we will move the program to Queens so we can have them where they can visit African churches and I am going to ask the Institute to sponsor this session too. Much goes on between Africa and the west and we are not getting much communication between Africa and the Chinese or Korean Mr. Chiu - internet based educational program housed in Queens offering entirely on line across China. He has offered his facilities for whatever we want to do in West Africa.

It will be wonderful to have some African classes translated into Chinese and being taught in Shanghai; so I can see those kinds of global networks emerging. It is very exciting and it's also going to take resources. The typical pattern was to look to the west and to look for resources that come from foundations and other places; continuing the

colonial pattern of dependency and until the resources are built out of the locations they are located, they will never truly be free. In two weeks what is a long term sustainable plan for financing and keeping this program going – someone has to pick this up someday, sometime, Eva's going need to compensated for all the work she is putting in here.

What we are going to do is to ask you all to be ready to think through this process – I will chair with Daniel to think about where we can do the fundraising – there are Africans who are a people of means. There might be foundations that are interested in international support. I am working with a group – Hope International and their problem was micro financing. A small group of people do small amounts to give sustainable approaches we are going to need your help as spokespeople to identify people that Daniel can approach. Ways that we can move beyond “let's simply write a foundation grant”. We will be talking about this with you – anyone who would like to join a fundraising committee we will welcome you and any ideas you have and I am sure Daniel is going to kill me for not taking up an offering.

If you would like to make a donation, you are certainly free to do so – let's not stop there let's think about how we can generate more resources than the group that is here. Maybe we can get Kofi to give the royalties of your next book – I am just kidding! Those of us in the academic world know that there are ways and resources that we can generate that. If you want to make a check out to TIDAC and leave it in Daniel's hands; it's a tax exempt organization so your donation is tax exempt – but beyond that let's think about how to do this in a way that sustains us over time and know that NYTS is in for the long haul with the Institute and with all of you and we continue this work. Thank you

Prof Mercy – vote of thanks:

Not long ago I stayed in my church for a very long program and usually we ask one of the young women to do the vote of thanks and we knew she had prepared a long protocol – the poor and wise girl was so tired that she got there and said I thank you all for coming, I thank God, Amen. I will say just a little more than that. I want to say thank you to Dale, Dan and representing all of us to enable this discerning process to begin.

We created a holy space here for the spirit of God, the spirit of our ancestors, the spirit of ecumenical movement, interchurch relations to come in and stimulate our discussion. In this holy place, we have stood and spoken and listened and we have heard the voice and voices of God and our ancestors asking us where is your sister, where is your brother, are you going to get together from the Diaspora and be a people, here in this holy place, we have talked and conversed and debated, we have puzzled over a lot of things and I as we prepare to go and have what I know to be a beautiful meal because I was one of the ones who tasted ahead of it; I want to say go in the strength and the love and concern that has brought us together:

Go in the spirit that has bound us together till now and will continue to bind us together, when we go, God will go with us everywhere and in every place. We were called to this holy place by the dreams and visions of our brother Dan but now we discover that it is our dreams, our vision and we want to make them a reality. A lot has been unveiled to us; there is a lot more to unveil. We have been called on a journey as the Bishops want to say, once called, you remain called – you remain a bishop forever so we have been called we remain called. So with us we might thank you I am also doing a commission: “Go in the strength of the community that we have created today and let us

all put our hands on TIDAC and make it a work that God has put into our hands to build a community of God's peoples". Amen

This strategy was accomplished because most of the Board members were in attendance in New York; had the training on their responsibilities and the logo of the Baobab tree was adopted for the Institute.

Adjuma ye ohia aduro
(*Work is the cure/medicine for poverty*)

1. Create a mission statement for the Institute by the Commissioned Team. (January – March, 2009).

The Advisory Board agreed that the Institute adopt the Baobab Tree as its symbol. Each member of the Advisory Board gave their interpretation of what the mission of the Institute should be. The mission of the Institute was decided as follows:

“The Institute’s mission is to facilitate learning; to guide others to develop an in-depth awareness of African Culture and its relationship to other religious faiths and to deepen the faith of all those who are on a path of religious and spiritual enlightenment”

In Ghana, the focus group will be two-fold: those who practice the African Tradition as well as Ghanaian Christian–Presbyterians and in the Diaspora, the focus will be Ghanaian immigrants as well as the African-American community who are ready to accept what Africans can bring to the Christian experience the World Christianity for any view that pertains to African Tradition & Culture. Prior to the implementation of the Demonstration project, the Site Team and I have established a schedule to help me achieve my goals.

Evaluation for Strategy 3 – This strategy was accomplished when the new Advisory Board agreed on the mission of the Institute and a Mission statement for the Institute is issued. The schedule was developed and is part of the appendix.

The Institute for Diasporan and African Culture was established as a non profit organization in the State of New York. Its status as a 501(c) 3 company is in process.

The Institute was established with three Directors and an Advisory board. The Executive Director of the Institute is Rev. Daniel Nyante. The Executive Director has the sole responsibility for making decisions for the Institute. The mission statement was accepted by the Advisory Board.

APPENDIX 6

TRAVEL JOURNAL

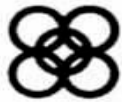


Foresight, wisdom

FOR

COMMISSIONED TEAM

Demonstration Project (Reverend Daniel Nyante)



Humility and modesty



Wisdom, learning

NAME: _____

DATES: December 18, 2008 – January 6, 2009



Law, authority
God



None is Greater than

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Page 30	Church Worship	Jan. 04, 2009
Page 31	Reflection - morning. Packing	Jan. 05, 2009
Page 32	Day of departure Accra to New York	Jan. 06, 2009

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

PLEASE TURN IN YOUR JOURNALS

TO

REV. DANIEL NYANTE

APPENDIX 7

SERVICE OF COMMISSIONING



Foresight & Wisdom

**ON
DECEMBER 7, 2008
AT BETHEL PRESBYTERIAN REFORMED CHURCH
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK**

**COMMISSIONED TEAM
Demonstration Project (Rev. Daniel Nyante)**



Humility & Modesty



Wisdom & Learning

**“THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS THE BEGINNING
OF WISDOM
ALL THOSE WHO PRACTICE IT HAVE
GOOD UNDERSTANDING”
PSALM 111:10**



Law & Authority



Except God
No one is Greater than God

SPONSORED BY

**THE INSTITUTE FOR DIASPORAN & AFRICAN STUDIES (TIDAC)
IN COLLABORATION WITH
THE NEW YORK THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY (NYTS)**

THE INSTITUTE FOR DIASPORAN & AFRICAN STUDIES (TIDAC)
PARTICIPANT'S PLEDGE

**I, ACKNOWLEDGE THAT GOD CREATED ALL PEOPLES OF THE
WORLD AND BLESSED THEM WITH CULTURAL DISTINCTIVES BY
WHICH THEIR LIVES WILL BE ENRICHED.**

**AS I ENCOUNTER THE AFFAIRS OF PEOPLE
WHOSE CULTURES DIFFER FROM MY OWN EXPERIENCE,
I CONFESS THAT MY FAMILIAR WAYS AND PREJUDICES
CAN BE AN IMPEDIMENT - SO I ASK FROM
GOD
INSIGHT, KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM.**

I PLEDGE:

- I) TO OBSERVE with interest the natural endowments of various cultures.**
- II) TO THINK impartially about what I see, especially, to think constructively about all phenomena that may seem different from my store of knowledge and experience.**
- III) TO ANALYSE objectively what I see, hear and experience in the light that God has shone in the world through Jesus Christ, His Son. May God's Holy Spirit grant me the discernment into the essence and richness in a culture that may be different from mine.**

I hereby pledge to do my best to seek God's revelation in the activities and festivities of the men, women and children that I meet.

**“My help comes from the LORD,
Who made heaven and earth.” Psalm 121:2**

SO HELP ME GOD!!!

APPENDIX 8

SERVICE OF COMMISSIONING

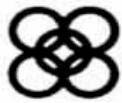


Foresight & Wisdom

**ON
DECEMBER 20, 2008**

**THE INSTITUTE FOR DIASPORAN AND AFRICAN CULTURE
(TIDAC), AKROPONG-AKUAPEM
GHANA**

**COMMISSIONED TEAM
Demonstration Project (Rev. Daniel Nyante)**



Humility & Modesty



Wisdom & Learning

**“THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS THE BEGINNING
OF WISDOM
ALL THOSE WHO PRACTICE IT HAVE
GOOD UNDERSTANDING”
PSALM 111:10**



Law & Authority



Except God
No one is Greater than God

SPONSORED BY

**THE INSTITUTE FOR DIASPORAN & AFRICAN STUDIES (TIDAC)
IN COLLABORATION WITH
THE NEW YORK THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY (NYTS)
THE INSTITUTE FOR DIASPORAN & AFRICAN STUDIES (TIDAC)
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**I, ACKNOWLEDGE THAT GOD CREATED ALL PEOPLES OF THE
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**AS I ENCOUNTER THE AFFAIRS OF PEOPLE
WHOSE CULTURES DIFFER FROM MY OWN EXPERIENCE,
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CAN BE AN IMPEDIMENT - SO I ASK FROM
GOD
INSIGHT, KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM.**

I PLEDGE:

- IV) TO OBSERVE with interest the natural endowments of various cultures.**
- V) TO THINK impartially about what I see, especially, to think constructively about all phenomena that may seem different from my store of knowledge and experience.**
- VI) TO ANALYSE objectively what I see, hear and experience in the light that God has shone in the world through Jesus Christ, His Son. May God's Holy Spirit grant me the discernment into the essence and richness in a culture that may be different from mine.**

I hereby pledge to do my best to seek God's revelation in the activities and festivities of the men, women and children that I meet.

**"My help comes from the LORD,
Who made heaven and earth." Psalm 121:2**

SO HELP ME GOD!!!

APPENDIX 9

**INITIAL PROPOSAL FOR THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROGRAM IN
DIASPORA AND AFRICAN CULTURE**

IN

GHANA, WEST AFRICA

to be offered by

***THE INSTITUTE FOR DIASPORAN
and AFRICAN CULTURE (TIDAC)***

in collaboration with

THE NEW YORK THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY (NYTS)

USA & GHANA

September 2008

Theology can be likened to a baobab tree – it is too wide for one’s arms to wrap around. This is especially true when we examine theology from the African perspective: It is so encompassing and there is so much to learn and understand that it is important we study theology from this perspective to ensure the African point-of-view is heard and understood.

The Institute for Diasporan and African Culture comes from an awareness, an awakening of sort, to learn, understand and teach others about African Tradition, Culture and Christianity. Our mission is to facilitate learning through workshops, seminars and lectures given by scholars, teachers and writers of the African Diaspora and to produce an interactive website and quarterly journal where such information will be published and shared. Our vision is to help others gain an appreciation for African culture and Christianity and to enhance the faith of all those who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is a need for Africans in Africa and the Diaspora to become aware of their surroundings; to gain appreciation for their tradition and culture and to understand their tradition and culture and how it enhances their faith. One of the ways the community can be made aware of this is through education, hence the Institute for Diasporan and African Culture, where students can further their theological education with an emphasis on Diasporan Studies and African Tradition and Religion.

Housed in an academic setting and with an interactive website to access information and a quarterly magazine/journal where information and new ideas will be published, the Institute will facilitate three (3) programs:

- d) Doctor of Ministry in Diasporan Studies; African Tradition and Religion
- e) Master of Divinity in African Tradition and Religion

f) Certificate program for preparation into Master of Divinity Program

The Doctor of Ministry Program will be a three-year program. The first academic year will be spent in Ghana; the second year will take place in the United States at the New York Theological Seminary; and, the final year will be completed in Ghana.

The Certificate Program in Christian Ministry provides an introduction to theological disciplines for laity, as well as ordained or lay ministers, and others involved or interested in ministry. The two-year course is divided into four semesters with attendance required at one overnight retreat each semester.

The Institute will be open to all denominations with all classes taught in English. Prospective students will submit to the Institute an application for admission similar to the New York Theological Seminary application and, after an intensive interview, students will be selected.

In collaboration with the New York Theological Seminary, the faculty will consist of theologians Professor Kofi Asare Opoku, Professor Mercy Oduyoye, Dr. Elizabeth Amoah, Professor Addo-Fenning, Dr. Reverend Felix Busby and other NYTS alumna to be named later.

The Institute Campus, where students will be housed, will be at Akropong, in Ghana as well as in the United States.

All students must take two (2) courses in African Religion and African Culture and complete all the core courses and electives. All core courses will be taken through the Institute and the New York Theological Seminary and the electives can be taken in any accredited institution. The Institute, along with NYTS, will seek funding to provide scholarships for the first ten- to-twenty students from Africa to enroll in the program.

Again, applicants will undergo very careful screening prior to the award of the scholarships. The Institute, with its offices in New York, will be run by the Director and his staff. The Board Members will be selected from well-known theologians who are interested in championing the cause of African Traditional Religion and Christianity.

###

APPENDIX 10

The Institute for Diasporan and African Culture (TIDAC)

Bethel Presbyterian Reformed Church

Church on the Edge

Canarsie Reformed Church

Presbyterian Church in Elmont

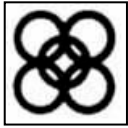
in collaboration with

New York Theological Seminary

Request the pleasure of your company

at

**Inaugural Activities
March 20th-22nd, 2008**



Humility and Modesty



Wisdom, Learning

Inauguration Workshop

**The Interchurch
Center
475 Riverside Drive
New York, NY 10115**

**Friday, March 20, 2009
12 - 6 pm**

Prayer & Healing Service

**Bethel Presby. Reformed Church
890 Flatbush Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11226**

**Prayer & Healing Service
Saturday, March 21, 2009
4- 6pm**

Thanksgiving Service

**Canarsie Reformed Church
1155 East 93rd Street
Brooklyn, New York 11236**

**Sunday, March 22, 2009
10:45 am**

**NEW YORK
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY**

...continuing the Biblical Seminary in New York

Meet Your Panelists

PANEL I

Dr. Marian Ronan, (NYTS)
Dr. Cynthia Diaz (NYTS)
Nana Kwasi Offei Agyeman, (Krontihene of Akropong, Akuapem)
Rev. Atiemo (Bethel Reformed Church, Brooklyn, NY)
Rev. Dr. Patrick Provost-Smith, (co-editor- Journal of World Christianity)

PANEL II

Dr. William Burrows (NYTS)
Rev. Dr. Felix Busby, (Canarsie Reformed Church, Brooklyn, NY)
Rev. Dr. Wanda Lundy (NYTS)
Rev. Kirk Lyons, Koinonia Bible Fellowship
Catechist Aboah Offei, Grace Presbyterian Church, Ghana

Mission



Theology



Culture



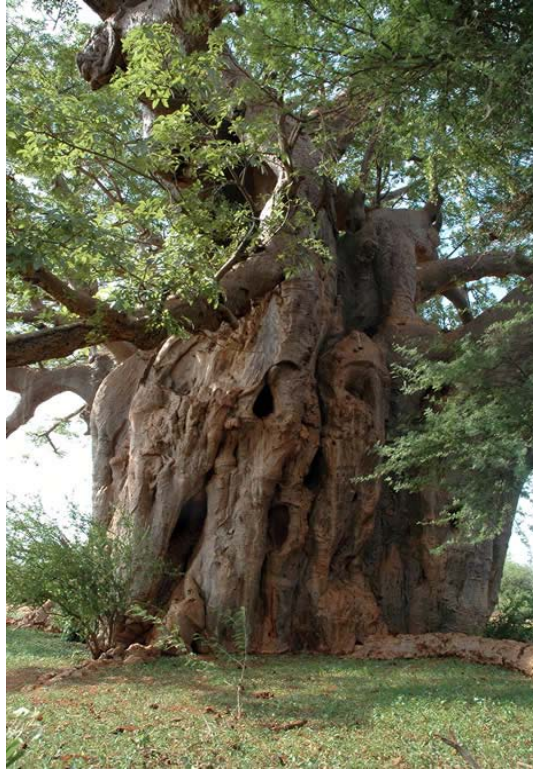
PROGRAM FOR INAUGURAL FORUM

Friday, March 20, 2009

12 NOON - 6 PM

12 noon:	Registration/ seating of guests
12:15 pm	Opening Prayer - Rev. Nyante - Executive Director of the Institute
12:20 pm	Welcome - Dr. Dale Irvin, President, NYTS Introduction of panelists and chairperson for the occasion - Eva Shaw-Taylor, TIDAC
12:45pm	Opening Remarks - by the Chair Introduction of the Institute and Topics for discussion by - Prof. Opoku & Prof. Oduyoye
1:00 - 2:00 pm	Panel I's Response - Dr. Marian Ronan, Dr. Cynthia Diaz, Nana Kwasi Offei Agyeman, Rev. Atiemo, Rev. Dr. Patrick Provost-Smith
2:15 - 3:15 pm	Panel II's Response - Rev. Dr. Wanda Lundy, Rev. Dr. Felix Busby, Rev. Kirk Lyons, Catechist Aboah Offei, Dr. William Burrows
3:15 pm	Questions from the audience & further panel discussions
5:00 pm	Fund Raising for the Institute
5:30 pm	Vote of Thanks by Prof. Mercy Oduyoye
5:40 pm	Dinner - compliments of friends of The Institute





Like a Baobab tree,

*The Institute for Diasporan and African Culture
(TIDAC)*

*embraces all knowledge; to gain wisdom
we learn with humility and modesty*

Mission



Theology



Culture



*The Institute for Diasporan & African Culture
(TIDAC)*

&

*New York Theological Seminary
(NYTS)*

Welcomes you

*To its
Inaugural Forum*

As part of its

Inaugural activities:

March 20, 2009

12 noon - 6 pm



APPENDIX 11

The Prayer and Healing Service at Bethel Presbyterian Reformed Church in Brooklyn – Saturday March 21, 2009

The healing service started at about 4 pm at the Bethel Presbyterian Reformed Church. The Bethel Choir started with Praise and worship for about 20 minutes. The service started with about 100 church members, mostly Bethel congregation and other denominations from Canarsie Reformed Church, Church on the Edge, Elmont and Manhattan Presbyterian Church including about 10 clergy of various denominations.

Rev. Samuel Atiemo opened the service by explaining the mission of TIDAC and apologized for Reverend Daniel Ramm for not being able to attend the service. He introduced Rev. Nyante and he thanked everyone for coming, and explained the mission of TIDAC. Rev. Dan Nyante was asked to introduce the members of the Advisory Board and all invited guests who were present.

Catechist Aboah Offei then took over and talked about how successful the inauguration was the previous day. He explained the symbol of TIDAC which is the Baobab Tree and how significant the tree is, from its roots to the branches, the leaves and every aspect of tree and its use to society. He said he was once told that if he ever got lost in the forest and he found a baobab tree, then he knew he wasn't lost. The tree would always lead him home. The baobab therefore symbolizes a good metaphor in the life of the African. He hoped that the value in the baobab tree will flourish into the lives of the people who had the vision of TIDAC.

He started the services with Isaiah 42:9:

See, the former things have taken place,
and new things I declare;

before they spring into being
I announce them to you.

Believe it or not, something new is going to happen to help you and you may reserve the information to help you in your understanding. God is bringing healing through TIDAC, so be open and receive your healing. We are serving the God of 2nd chances, may you begin to receive your resurrection. Do not be surprised for what happens to you because God is the healer and is bringing your healing. God is a restoration God who will do it again for you, just believe it and it can happen. I am a witness to what God does in other people, lots of people who have been condemned by medical doctors and yet they overcome through the belief in the church and prayers. Prayers do wonderful things and the belief in the blood of Jesus does wonderful things

May TIDAC be functional so that Africans can look up to TIDAC with hope and believe the Lord is in our midst. The God who repairs, restores and replaces is the God who we are working for. He is the light to the blind and will open up again. May God never be mute in His word to you! May what he has covenanted with you be real. Something new begins to start from today. There is new hope and that hope is alive.

He then announced that all who are sick and needed healing should come forward to be healed. Those who needed healing formed a line at the aisle and he started his healing process and prayed for God's help and asked the Holy Spirit to start the healing of each one of those that had lined up for healing. He also asked the whole congregation to pray for each and everyone that needs orthopedic healing; he finally prayed that God will always do the wonderful things for all those who believe in His miracles. He assured everyone that they will be healed and ended his healing service. The congregation sang for a while and Rev. Atiemo announced that the offering that afternoon was for TIDAC.

So all the offering collected was given to TIDAC which amounted to about \$450.00.

Rev. Nyante prayed for the offering and Ms. Eva Shaw-Taylor thanked all for coming and asked each and everyone to pick a present on their way out. The service came to an end at about 7.00 pm.

APPENDIX 12

Thanksgiving and Prayer Service at Canarsie Reformed Church on Sunday March 22, 2009.

The church service started at about 10:30 am. There were congregations from Bethel Presbyterian Reformed Church as well for a total of about 200 people worshipping the one and only God; who is the maker of human and earth. There were two parts to the service. The first part was the regular Canarsie Church Service and the second part was the Thanksgiving Service for TIDAC. (See appendix for church program).

Before the sermon, Rev. Busby of Canarsie Church emphasized how it is important to give thanks. He announced the inauguration of TIDAC and talked about the programs from Friday, March 20, 2009 to the culmination of the thanksgiving service. He also explained how Rev. Nyante has been consistent in what he wants to do; and talked about how God uses people for His own reasons. The people are not too sure of what they are doing but pray to God to lead them into His purpose. Out of something out of the ordinary, God is leading us into what He really wants from us and it happens only when we open our hearts and let the Spirit lead us.

He announced the offering and after the offering Rev. Busby sang to praise God to offer his gratitude to God the Father, - To God be the Glory. Rev. Nyante was asked to introduce the special invited guests and Professor Kofi Asare Opoku was asked to give a word on TIDAC, having been caught unaware, he said that he was not prepared to speak but then again one must always be ready when called upon to speak. He brought greetings from Africa where all human beings originated. We know more about the Christian heritage than we know about our own and he felt it was time for us to get to know our culture.

Professor Opoku

- “When the tongue is present, the teeth do not talk.”
- A person’s mouth can free them but the same mouth can also condemn them. We are guided by what we say.
- Africa is home to all human beings. Africa is “our home”.
- It takes one person to kill an elephant but the whole community eats the meat. In this way Rev. Nyante is the hunter and we will all benefit from his vision to open TIDAC.
- Rev. Nyante saw the need for a place of study about African culture in Africa and the Americas. He also envisioned a place where we can study our traditional culture as well as our more recently acquired Christian heritage.
- Unfortunately many Africans know more about their Christian heritage than their African heritage. We have such a great heritage that we have little knowledge about. There are so many ideas that are not bearing fruit.
- Through TIDAC we can all share our ideas and cultures through openness. We can come together without preconceived notions to learn together.
- There are five proverbs I would like to mention that all promote the idea of openness and adventurousness in learning.
- “One must come out of one’s house to begin learning.” We must take steps away from our familiar surroundings in order to learn about others.
- “If you haven’t been outside of your house you cannot say that your mother’s soup is the best.” You must experience different things in order to speak with such authority. If we don’t try new things how do we know what is best?
- “Truth is like a Baobab tree, one person’s arms cannot embrace it.” This proverb calls for openness; we must all come together and join hands to get around it.
- “No matter how big one eye may be, two is better.” We must be open to all opinions and ideas in order to expand our knowledge.
- Africans have a rich tradition of passing down stories through the years. “When a person dies, their tongue does not rot.” The story of the baobab tree or the “upside down tree” as some people call it has been passed down since creation. In the story the Creator gives each animal a seedling and tells them to go out and plant them. The hyena was given the seed for the baobab tree. Because we all know hyenas are very clumsy in nature he planted the seed upside down. This is why the baobab tree looks as if it was planted upside down.

- “Until lions have their own historians, the tale of the hunt will always favor the hunter.” Africans have had their history and culture told by historians that were not theirs. TIDAC gives us the opportunity to interpret our own culture.
- TIDAC calls for people to join together; not just people of the Diaspora or Christians, but all people.

Some churches in Africa exclude tribal leaders as pagans or fetishists but TIDAC will give us the opportunity to explore this rich part of our heritage without scrutiny or judgment.

Nana Offei Kwasi Agyeman stated that he is present to represent the traditional aspect of Ghanaian culture. His ancestors sent him to this inauguration so he could present their side of the story. He also wanted to state that a lot of chiefs/traditional leaders are Christians and are also proud of their culture.

Dr. Prof. Mercy Oduyoye preached the sermon and the following are some of the points she made:

- God left the Holy Spirit with us until the work on earth is done.
- There is only one true sermon in Christianity – God has served us through Christ; therefore we give thanks because it is through God’s grace.
- In today’s world it seems we are always complaining instead of giving thanks.
- The relationship between God and Israel is a good representation of how we relate to God.
- Because we live because of God’s grace we must respond with obedience.
- The Book of Jeremiah provides us with a panorama of Israel’s relationship with God. The people of Israel expected God to bail them out. Even though the people were warned of the consequences of disobedience they preferred the sweet talk of false prophets. The people cried to God to remind him of the Covenant, as if he had forgotten.
- “You are our hope, our savior in times of trouble; therefore we will wait for you.”
- God is our salvation – that is the bedrock of our faith.

- We can hear God's voice leading us through life. The Holy Spirit is our guide.
- If God dealt with us based on how we behave we would have a lot to worry about. But I believe that God deals with us based on what we deserve.
- We must put our hands into God's hand and say God is faithful and he will endure us forever.
- If we encourage each other to do right then all will be right with the world.
- Life is sustained with hope.
- When it feels like the horizon is closing in on us, be merry in the face of hard labor because there is a time and season for everything. We must live our lives joyfully in the midst of these hard times.
- God has a time for everything; all things will pass, good or bad.
- We must live joyfully because God is with us even though it is difficult to be joyful when things are going wrong.
- Habakkuk 3:17 – Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.
- In today's world things are very mixed up. Sometimes we don't know whether to laugh or cry. We have many large problems facing us; global warming, recession, terrorism, etc. This makes joy with God forever seem unimaginable. We must understand that there is nothing new under the sun that hasn't happened and will happen.
- Jeremiah reminds us of realism. We must accept what is coming but know that even in adversity, God is still there and he is our salvation.
- "I will build you and you shall be built". We must praise the mighty name of God because we are certain to be delivered.
- We must live lives that please God. We also have to reflect on the relationship we have with God and teach our children to walk with God.
- We should live joyfully in the midst of these bad times. As people of faith we know God is our salvation and the name of God shall be exalted.
- The guidepost for Jeremiah becomes our consolation. Joy will replace mourning; your work will be rewarded.

- God works through the faithless daughters to help humanity believe.
- The little good deeds in life could be God's way of saving us.
- Don't spite what God offers you. Our prejudice cheats us out of receiving help from others who are different.
- Our eyes need to be open to see the good during these tough times.
- Hope enables us to live our lives joyfully; life is a daily gift from God.
- I am sure there is something up there in the hands of God; so I must be open to receive it.
- If we sow the seeds of justice, expect to harvest peace.
- We must let the good in Heaven reach our hearts.
- The service was rich with the knowledge it imparted to the congregation and the following wisdom from Professor Opoku adds to the message of Professor Mercy:

The service ended with a reception at the hall of the Canarsie Church.

APPENDIX 13

THE INSTITUTE FOR DIASPORAN AND AFRICAN STUDIES
90 Livingston Street Brooklyn, New York 11201
Tel: (718) 858-2396, Fax: (718) 858-6101

April 2-3, 2009

Seeing God at Work in the World: Scripture, History, and Prophecy

A Seminar on Theological Education and Pastoral Training for Africa
for the 21st Century

Wednesday, April 1 - The Promise of God and the Redemption of Creation

- 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Faith and Faithfulness: Being 'Set Right' With God
- 12:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. Lunch
- 2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. The Spirit Poured Out: God's Work in History

Thursday, April 2 - Africa and the New Global Face of Christianity

- 9:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. The Spirit Poured Out in Africa
- 10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. What Next? African Leadership for Theological Education and Pastoral Training
- 12:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. Lunch
- 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. Resources for Theological Education in Africa
- 4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. Concluding Discussion and Remarks

Mission

Theology

Culture

**Co-sponsored by The Institute for Diasporan and African Studies (TIDAC), and
New York Theological Seminary, (NYTS)**

TIDAC

Africa and the New Global Face of Christianity

April 2, 2009

Degree & Certificate Programs

- TIDAC will offer degree and certificate programs. TIDAC will also offer resources for religious and theological education in Africa.
- TIDAC will incorporate technology into Theological education to make it a truly global experience.
- Theology can be combined with other subjects and TIDAC will explore that idea. This collaboration gives new visions about what a university can be.
- TIDAC aims for a more holistic approach to education by combining vocations with theology.
- Programs currently available:
 1. ***Certificate in Divinity*** – Focus on African Traditional Religions. Two (2) years.
 2. ***Master of Divinity*** – African Traditional Religions and Christianity. Three – four (3-4) years.
 3. ***Doctorate in Ministry*** – This program requires experience in ministry. This will be open to pastors and ministers exclusively. Three – four (3-4) years.
- The Masters in Divinity is similar to a M.A. It requires coursework, exposure to the arts of ministry, church administration. This is definitely a program for people interested in ministry.

- The doctorate in Ministry is tailored to people with ministry experience who are looking for more training and education. If you enter this program, Ministry should be your primary vocation.

About TIDAC

- We are currently trying to make scholarships available.
- We will try to minimize price as much as possible to make the education affordable.
- We will be accredited in less than a year.
- The campus will be in Akropong. Resources will be available online regardless of location.
- There will be some classes in New York but trips to Ghana will be required.
- There is currently an application fee of \$50.00 that is to be paid to NYTS to apply for TIDAC. TIDAC will cover this price so the application is free to everyone.
- The certificate program is more focused on the local level. It will be a blend of religious and vocational education.
- TIDAC is currently developing entrance exams which will make admission less
- The schedule for classes will most likely to cater to people who work during the day. Classes will likely be made available in the evenings and weekend.

Professor Mercy

- TIDAC must encourage women to study as well.
- You must have a theological foundation in order to touch people.

- Many Africans carry around baggage – their traditions. TIDAC will enable us to look at those traditions and study them; not be ashamed by them.
- Many people who look to undertake these programs are working professionals who feel at this point in their life they need theology.
- Economy, Ecology and Theology are all related. A greater understanding of one can only lead to a better understanding of all.
- Do not worry about where your credits come from. The administration will determine what your credits are equivalent to and transfer them accordingly.

Dr. Elizabeth Amoah

- We should not preach in order to be the “best” preacher”.
- You can preach the good news without being on t.v. jumping around and putting on a show.
- A true pastor does not need all those bells and whistles to reach someone. You should not be persuaded by the person; we should be moved by the good news.

APPENDIX 14



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Mr Mrs E. G. Nyante
Enugu

23. 12. 35.

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